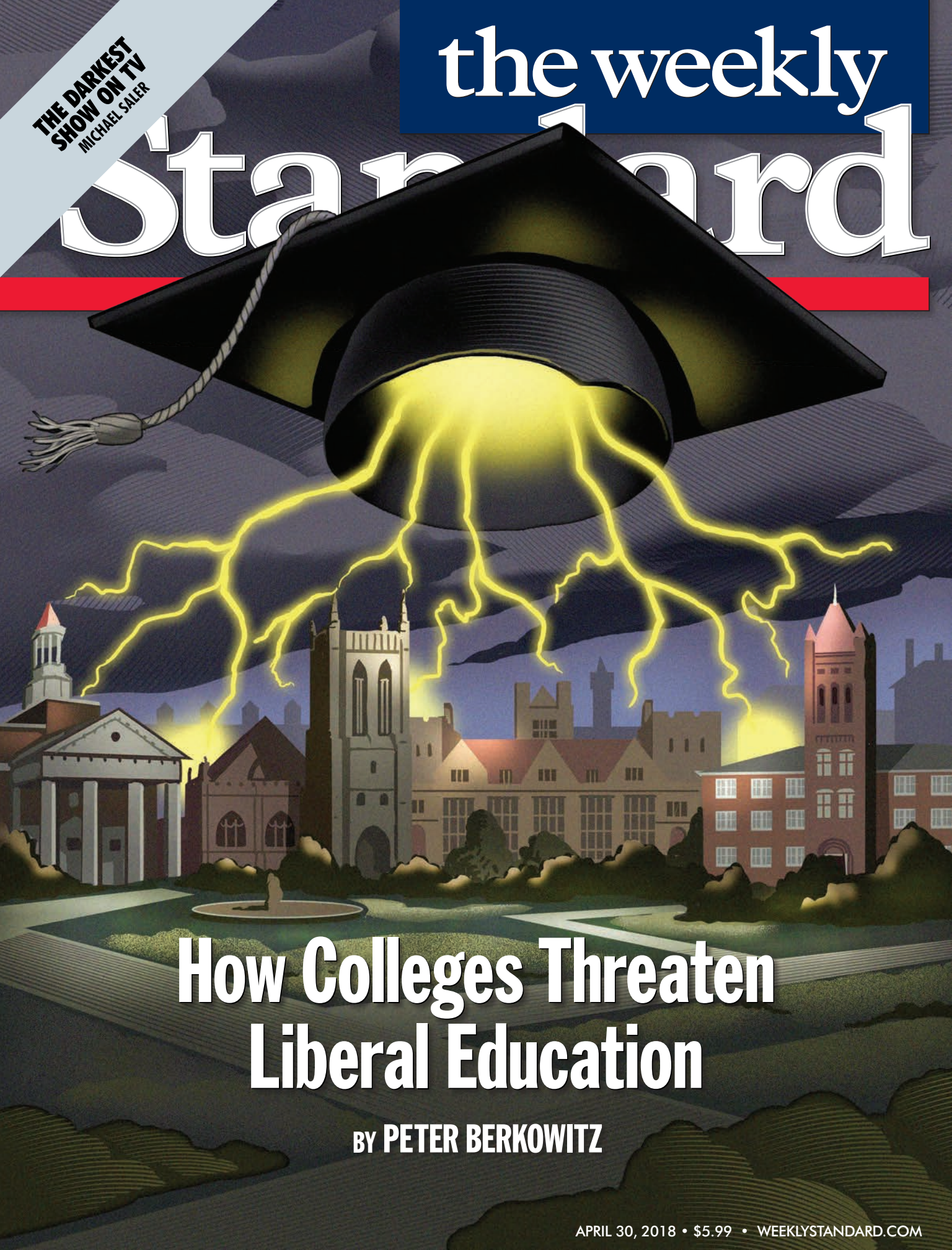


**THE DARKEST
SHOW ON TV**
MICHAEL SALER

the weekly

Standard



How Colleges Threaten Liberal Education

BY PETER BERKOWITZ

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April 30, 2018 • Volume 23, Number 32



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Hells Commenters

It occurs to us that we don't read much anymore about outlaw motorcycle gangs. A few decades ago, when *THE SCRAPBOOK* was young, movies and television and newspapers teemed with fearful reports about the Hells Angels, the Outlaws, and the Pagans. We wonder what became of the original "1 percenters." (The term originated from a claim by the American Motorcyclist Association that 99 percent of motorcyclists were law-abiding citizens—hence the "1%" patch on many of the outlaws' vests.)

What happened to outlaw motorcycle gangs? We think we've found part of the answer: They discovered the Internet.

In March, the Marion Hotel in the Canadian province of Manitoba turned away members of the Hells Angels. When the president of the local Hells Angels chapter, the Manitoba Nomads, heard about it, he took decisive action.



You might have expected the hotel to end in smoldering ruins, the hotel owner to be roughed up, or worse. But no: When the Hells Angels across North America heard about it, they vented their rage on Facebook. The hotel soon took its

Facebook page down, so overwhelmed was it with critical comments. At that point, the bikers turned their attention to the hotel's restaurant, the Marion Street Eatery. According to a CBC report, "Within 24 hours hundreds of people, most of them from outside Canada, posted one-star reviews on the restaurant's Facebook page, reducing its 4.5-star reputation to three stars overnight."

Having obliterated the eatery's Facebook page, the outlaws went on TripAdvisor to load the restaurant's entry with hostile reviews. TripAdvisor deemed the online onslaught vandalism, and the negative reviews were quickly removed from the site.

Granted, the Facebook and TripAdvisor comments included some pretty rough language. Still, we prefer the newer, social media-savvy Hells Angels to the older ones. ♦

Walk Tall . . .

If the Hells Angels have softened somewhat, others are toughening up—and we bless them for it. A school district in Erie, Pennsylvania, faced with the increasing frequency of school shootings, has passed out baseball bats to its teachers. That strikes us as a neat compromise between, on the one hand, cowering in unarmed fear and, on the other, arming teachers and administrators with firearms. The latter is of course favored by President Trump, but extremely unlikely to become policy any time soon.

True, the weapons aren't full-length; they're the 16-inch souvenir-style bats. But these can be wielded in one hand more easily and accurately—we wouldn't want to be whacked by one.

District officials insist they're not handing out the weapons for wanton



Before his time: no-nonsense Joe Clark, principal of Paterson, New Jersey's tough Eastside High School in 1988

use; they're strictly for emergent situations. "The bats are more symbolic than anything," the district superintendent says. "However, we want

to have one consistent tool to have at somebody's disposal in a classroom in the event they have to fight."

We agree entirely. Arming teachers with handguns creates more problems than it solves—liability in the event of stolen guns, the enormous cost of buying and distributing so many firearms, and so on. Mid-sized bats, on the other hand, are comparatively cheap, less apt to hurt the wrong person, and capable of serious nonlethal damage to an assailant.

Another official, the president of the local education association, makes an equally valid point: "It's to make people comfortable with the idea that they can attack and not simply go into hard lockdown and just hide." We recall the 2015 Thalys train en route from Amsterdam to Paris in which a Frenchman, a Briton, and an American confronted and subdued a

TOP: BIGSTOCK; BELOW: JOE MCNALLY / GETTY

rifle-wielding terrorist. Before that, the passengers on Flight 93 decided to act rather than do nothing. In both cases, many lives were saved.

The Erie school officials are right: As the writer of Ecclesiastes didn't quite say, there's a time to hide and a time to fight. ♦

Rebel Without a Date

Since the rise of the counterculture in the 1960s and the idealization of rebellion for its own sake, it's been awfully hard for young people to rebel. How are you supposed to be a rebel or a maverick when everybody else is one too? THE SCRAPBOOK solved this problem, as a university student on a left-wing campus many years ago, by wearing a tie to class. But we acknowledge that this was an extreme measure to which most peaceable young people would be reluctant to resort.

In the *Washington Post* this week, we read about a Boston College professor of philosophy who's found a way to encourage real rebellion: She challenges students to ask someone on a date. Just—a simple date. She includes only two requirements: no alcohol and no physical contact.

At a time when campus social life seems to oscillate between drunken hookups on one end of the spectrum and loneliness on the other, dating can be a “weirdly countercultural thing to do,” as Professor Kerry



A HIGHER LOYALTY

RAMIREZ

Cronin puts it. And in the age of microaggressions, asking another student to coffee or dinner might easily sound like some strange and vaguely inappropriate advance.

Cronin also thinks college kids don't date much anymore because they're facing tremendous loads of student debt and need to find a good job to pay them off. “Even students' parents are

telling them: ‘Don't get caught up in a relationship now; you need to get your career set and on track before you even really start thinking about that,’” she says. Dating entangles people in emotional relationships that distract them from long-term career goals; it's far easier simply to hook up from time to time and move on.

“This is mostly not about meeting your soulmate,” Cronin tells her students; “it's mostly about social courage and challenging yourself to be a little countercultural.”

How deeply sad that it's come to this. But we're happy to know there are cultural insurgents like Professor Cronin working to upend the conventions of a twisted age. ♦



KEYSTONE FEATURES / GETTY

HEY, WANNA GO SHOUT DOWN A VISITING SPEAKER AND THEN GRAB A DOUBLE-LATTE EXTRA SKIM AND SOME AVOCADO TOAST?

He Got, He Got, He Got a Pulitzer

The Pulitzer Prize recipients were announced on April 16, and there were few surprises. The awards for journalism were unobjectionable (although we wonder how many more Pulitzers the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* really need). It was the Pulitzer for music that grabbed the most attention: It went to rapper Kendrick Lamar for an album charmingly called *DAMN*.

The Pulitzer for music has not always gone to the recipients we would have chosen, but over time it's been a serious award. Past recipients: Samuel Barber for his Piano Concerto in 1963; Ned Rorem for his orchestral work *Air Music* in 1976; Morton Gould's work for strings, *Stringmusic*, in 1995; and posthumous awards for Duke Ellington and Thelonious Monk in 1999 and 2006 respectively.

Alas, the Pulitzer's music judges, like their counterparts on many other cultural award panels, are fashion-conscious. We confess we were not intimately familiar with Lamar's work—rap is not our thing. Perhaps the more important point to make, though, is that Lamar is a highly successful pop artist. He already won a Grammy this year for *DAMN*. In 2015 he won four Grammys for his album *To Pimp a Butterfly*. Lamar has achieved international fame and earned a great deal of money for his undeniable talents. We wish the man

well. But the Pulitzer for music has traditionally gone to non-celebrities for highly complex compositions that will never top the charts or draw crowds of teenagers to performances.

We'll leave it to readers to decide whether Lamar's compositions merit the highest honor of a venerable cultural institution. Having viewed a few of his performances online, we'll readily admit he's a talented performer, but we wonder whether his entrancing but tuneless chants will stand the test of time. Nor could we glean any sense from Lamar's verse. A sampling from his song "DNA":

I got, I got, I got, I got
Loyalty, got royalty inside my DNA
Cocaine quarter piece, got war and
peace inside my DNA
I got power, poison, pain, and joy
inside my DNA
I got hustle, though, ambition, flow
inside my DNA
I was born like this, since one like this
Immaculate conception
I transform like this, perform like this
Was Yeshua's new weapon
I don't contemplate, I meditate, then
off your f—ing head
This that put-the-kids-to-bed . . .

Lamar's *DAMN*, according to the Pulitzer committee, is a "song collection unified by its vernacular authenticity and rhythmic dynamism." We'll take their word for it. ♦

No Modifier Left Behind

Let's just cut to the chase: There's not likely to be a more meaningful, absorbing, forceful and radical performance by an American musician this year, or any year soon, than Beyoncé's headlining set at the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival on Saturday night. It was rich with history, potentially political and visually grand. By turns uproarious, rowdy, and lush. A gobsmacking marvel of choreography and musical direction. And not unimportantly, it obliterated the ideology of the relaxed festival . . ." (Jon Caramanica, "Beyoncé Is Bigger Than Coachella," *New York Times*, April 15, 2018). ♦



The much-lauded Mr. Lamar

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The Weekly Standard (ISSN 1083-3013), a division of Clarity Media Group, is published weekly (except one week in March, one week in June, one week in August, and one week in December) at 1152 15th St., NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20005. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 421203, Palm Coast, FL 32142-1203. For subscription customer service in the United States, call 1-800-274-7293. For new subscription orders, please call 1-800-274-7293. Subscribers: Please send new subscription orders and changes of address to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 421203, Palm Coast, FL 32142-1203. Please include your latest magazine mailing label. Allow 3 to 5 weeks for arrival of first copy and address changes. Canadian/foreign orders require additional postage and must be paid in full prior to commencement of service. Canadian/foreign subscribers may call 1-386-597-4378 for subscription inquiries. American Express, Visa/MasterCard payments accepted. Cover price, \$5.99. Back issues, \$5.99 (includes postage and handling). Send letters to the editor to The Weekly Standard, 1152 15th Street, NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20005-4617. For a copy of The Weekly Standard Privacy Policy, visit www.weeklystandard.com or write to Customer Service, The Weekly Standard, 1152 15th St., NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20005. Copyright 2018, Clarity Media Group. All rights reserved. No material in The Weekly Standard may be reprinted without permission of the copyright owner. The Weekly Standard is a registered trademark of Clarity Media Group.



The Non-Hobbyist

I have never had, nor felt the need of having, a hobby. When I was a kid, friends of mine collected stamps or miniature cars or made model airplanes. I did none of these things. When I was 11 or 12, a shop moved into our neighborhood called Hobby Models, catering to hobbyists of all sorts. I found nothing of the least interest there. I didn't disdain or put down friends with hobbies. In fact, I rather envied them. I myself seemed to have neither the temperament nor the skill to be a hobbyist.

Something there is about a hobby that suggests handsome margins of leisure in one's life—that and interests beyond the humdrum of merely making a living. That a man or woman grows roses or keeps orchids, does woodworking, searches out coins from antiquity, seeks out first editions, or collects 19th-century cookbooks gives that man or woman's life added dimension.

None of these hobbies, or any other I have been able to discover, has attracted me. Perhaps a writer, being too dreamy, doesn't require a hobby. A year or so ago, my dentist having retired, I signed on with the man who had taken over his practice and who asked me to fill out a medical-history form for him. Toward the bottom of the form, on its second page, was the simple question, "Hobbies?" Not wishing to leave a blank, I wrote in "Grievance collecting."

At one time hobbies seemed pandemic. So much so that in the early 1950s, trousers called "hobby jeans" went on the market. Hobbyless though I was, I nevertheless had a pair of these jeans, which were of lightweight cotton, baby blue, with ample pockets, and a comfortable elastic band round the waist. When the chap-

ter devoted to jeans in the history of the decline and fall of the West comes to be written, I hope hobby jeans will at least get a footnote.

The danger in a hobby is that it can elide into an obsession. One can easily turn from a hobbyist into a collector, from a collector into a connoisseur. (The distinction between a collector and a connoisseur is that the former



wants everything in whatever he is collecting, the latter wants only the very best.) I recently read *The Wine Lover's Daughter*, Anne Fadiman's memoir of the obsession of her father, the literary critic Clifton Fadiman, with wine. As it happens, I worked with Kip (as we called him) Fadiman on the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in the 1960s and liked him, though I was often amused by his pretensions. At the age of 63, he told a friend of mine, "What do I have left to live for? Certain wines, a few cheeses." He once wrote a rubric for that portion of the encyclopaedia that was devoted to the movies: "The curious conflation of a new technology and a rising ethnic group." I recall passing a note to a friend at the conference table at which this was discussed that read: "I believe he means the Jews got there first."

The interest for me in Anne Fadiman's memoir is in how, in her father's case, a hobby, acquiring knowledge about wine, turned into a continuing act that gave meaning—or so at least he believed—to the life of this highly intelligent man. Born in Brooklyn, the son of immigrant Jewish parents, Kip Fadiman had been exposed to anti-Semitism early in life. He once told me that he had been denied entry into graduate school at Columbia because the English department there had already chosen its one Jewish student, Lionel

Trilling. These experiences caused him to attempt to shed his Jewishness, and he sought to do so in part through indulgence in expensive wine. For Kip, in his daughter's words, wine was one "of the indices of civilization." Through wine he would escape his origins. Hobbyism spun utterly out of control. Sad stuff, really.

Kip Fadiman's story is a stern reminder that a hobby should stay in bounds—remain a hobby merely. Which brings to mind the one joke about hobbies I know. Two old friends in New York meet after a hiatus of some years. Both are now retired. One asks the other what he does to fill his time.

"I have a hobby," he says. "I raise bees."

"Really," says the other, "here in New York?"

"Yes, in my apartment."

"But don't you still live in that studio apartment on West 79th Street?"

"I do."

"So where do you keep the bees?"

"In a suitcase in my closet."

"A suitcase in your closet! How can the bees breathe? They'll die."

"So if they die, they die," the man replies. "It's only a hobby."

Only a hobby—the old boy got it right, absolutely nailed it.

JOSEPH EPSTEIN

Party over Country

For 16 months, Democrats have complained that Republicans have put their political party over the best interests of the country by rationalizing and normalizing the unbecoming behavior of Donald Trump. We've often agreed with those assessments. Republicans, sadly, have made a habit of putting partisan politics over the national interest in their fealty to Trump.

Developments surrounding the nomination of Mike Pompeo to be secretary of state, however, reveal Democrats' high-minded complaints to be little more than posturing. Senate Democrats are playing political games with a highly qualified nominee. That alone is irresponsible. That they are doing so after complaining for a year about State Department vacancies and the resultant crippling of U.S. diplomacy reveals a deeply cynical mendacity. That they're doing so while the Trump administration faces an array of high-stakes challenges—Russian aggression, Iranian nukes, Syrian slaughter, North Korean threats, Chinese expansionism—is disgraceful.

There is no question Pompeo is qualified. He graduated from West Point at the top of his class. He served as a tank officer in the U.S. Army and patrolled the Berlin Wall before its fall. He went to Harvard Law School and was an editor of its famous law review. He built a successful business and, after his election to the House of Representatives from Kansas's Fourth District, established himself as a leader on foreign policy and national security issues. He served three terms in Congress, and then Trump picked him to run the Central Intelligence Agency.

Pompeo arrived at Langley with three strikes against him: He was an elected official, he was a Republican, and he came serving a president who had been in an open rhetorical war with the American intelligence community. But he made himself available to intel officers of all stripes, exemplifying a favorite lesson he learned in the Army: "Shut up and listen." He made clear that, unlike his predecessor, he would not use the CIA for politics and that he wouldn't leave its officers to fend for themselves when sub-

ject to attacks from elected officials. Pompeo quickly won over a skeptical bureaucracy at Langley.

His tenure at the CIA was brief, but it was clearly a success. Yet Democrats who voted to confirm Pompeo as CIA director are balking about supporting him now. Their objections are flimsy—often embarrassingly so. As Jenna Lifharts notes in her nearby report on the nomination fight, California senator Dianne Feinstein has said she will not vote for Pompeo. Her rationale: "The secretary of state is a very different role than CIA director, and it's not the kind of position you learn on the job. I sense a certain disdain for diplomacy in Mike Pompeo that I believe disqualifies him from being our next senior diplomat."

What's changed? When Feinstein voted for Pompeo in 2017, she was a long way out from reelection and reportedly considering retirement. Having announced that she's seeking another term, she now needs to fight off a progressive challenger in a very blue state. Politics over country.

Feinstein was one of 15 Democrats who voted to confirm Pompeo in 2017. He'll only get a few of those votes this time. In 2009, Hillary Clinton was confirmed 94-2, a victory margin that included 39 Republicans even after a serious and prescient debate about potential conflicts of interest with the Clinton Foundation. In 2013, John Kerry was confirmed 94-3, with 42 Republicans supporting him, despite his long history of partisanship and his false claim that he'd "opposed [George W. Bush's] decision to go into Iraq."

Senator Bob Menendez, ranking Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, announced that he's opposing Pompeo. He complained that Pompeo's nomination-hearing testimony was too vague, offering "a series of goals but no strategy." This is nonsense—a made-up excuse meant to hide petty partisanship behind a meaningful-sounding objection. Pompeo's testimony was sharp. He demonstrated a deep understanding of the wide range of challenges he's likely to face if confirmed. But Pompeo was never going to be specific enough to satisfy Menendez. The



Mike Pompeo testifying on April 12

New Jersey senator submitted 698 questions for Pompeo to answer in writing—an obnoxious total meant not to elicit real responses but to grind the process to a halt. Combined, the rest of the committee submitted 318.

Menendez is supposed to be a leader of his party on foreign policy. The fact that Mike Pompeo will likely receive a vote of the full Senate without a positive recommendation from the Foreign Relations Committee says far more about the mulish partisanship of Democrats than it does his ability to successfully do the job.

The good news is that at press time Pompeo looks likely to have the support of at least two Democrats (Heidi Heitkamp of North Dakota has said she will support him and Joe Manchin of West Virginia is leaning toward the same decision). This is enough to make him the next secretary of state. But the vote isn't for several days and surprises are not terribly surprising in Trump's Washington. The question for Democrats: What if you block him?

Pompeo is a smart, thoughtful leader who has the trust and the ear of the country's president. He's used his influence to shape Trump's thinking on such difficult issues as Iran, Afghanistan, Syria, and North Korea. If Pompeo doesn't get the job, who does? Someone like Rex Tillerson, skeptical of diplomacy and disliked by the president? Someone Trumpier? How does Secretary of State Dana Rohrabacher sound? And what about no one at all—a void at the heart of U.S. diplomacy leaving President Trump out there on his own? This is a man who reportedly said of North Korea's dictator, Kim Jong-un: "Just get me in the room with the guy and I'll figure it out." Is party over country worth that? ♦

A Failure to Communicate



Ambassador Nikki Haley

to the public, and that debility has consequences beyond mere politics.

The problem can be located in the Oval Office: When President Trump makes a decision, or reverses one, he

doesn't always tell the relevant people. FBI director James Comey found out he'd been fired from the media. When Trump fired Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, he did so by tweet; the secretary wasn't told in advance.

This week, it was U.N. ambassador Nikki Haley's turn.

Haley wasn't fired but reprimanded—and wrongly. On April 15, appearing on *Face the Nation*, she announced the imposition of new sanctions on Russia for its abetting of Bashar al-Assad's nefarious regime. She said what she understood was the president's position: "Russian sanctions will be coming down. [Treasury] Secretary Mnuchin will be announcing those on Monday if he hasn't already and they will go directly to any sort of companies that were dealing with equipment related to Assad and chemical weapons use."

People who've followed Haley's career tell us she has a tendency to say too much too soon, but in this case she appears to have stated exactly what the cabinet had agreed upon. Only, the president had changed his mind—evidently without bothering to apprise his subordinates. From Mar-a-Lago, Larry Kudlow, the president's national economic adviser, contradicted Haley. She had, Kudlow told reporters, gotten "ahead of the curve" by announcing the new sanctions; the ambassador may have had "some momentary confusion about that." Another White House official told the *Washington Post* that Haley's remark was "an error that needs to be mopped up."

Haley responded to Kudlow curtly. "With all due respect," she said, "I don't get confused." Later, and very much to his credit, Kudlow called Haley to apologize. "She was certainly not confused," he further told the *New York Times*. He admitted that he was "totally wrong" to speak as he did.

What almost certainly happened is that the president balked at the sanctions, his national security team sans Haley agreed to the change, and either someone forgot to tell Haley or everyone did. This is what happens when a president and his staff haven't established a viable decision-making process.

There's more at stake here than the administration's opening itself to criticism and ridicule. After Haley's announcement, Dmitry Peskov, Vladimir Putin's press secretary, accused the United States of using Syria as a pretext: "This cannot have any relation to and cannot be motivated by, considerations of the situation in Syria or any other country. . . . I would call this international economic raiding rather than anything else."

Perhaps the administration will impose those further sanctions. We hope so. But the announcement and walk-back provoked a needless round of diplomatic sniping with the nation's chief adversary and made the United States appear indecisive and incompetent. Trump famously values unpredictability. We wish he wouldn't use it so often against his own staff. ♦

HECTOR RETAMAL / AFP / GETTY

ANDREW FERGUSON

Barbara Bush's subversive secret to happiness

With the death of Barbara Bush, much, though maybe not enough, has been made of her once-famous commencement address to the Wellesley College class of 1990. Read today it has the feel of an antique. But her voice is strong in it, and she was always worth listening to.

Wellesley's invitation to Mrs. Bush was controversial, especially within the graduating class itself. To many of the seniors she was unqualified for the invitation because her prominence was derivative. She dropped out of college to marry her beau and never went back. She raised a large family while her husband climbed the greasy pole, leaving her alone in a scrum of squalling kids. With her husband's success came her own. Her fame was as a wife and mother.

More than 150 seniors, roughly a third of the class, sent a letter to the school's president. "To honor Barbara Bush as a commencement speaker is to honor a woman who has gained recognition through the achievements of her husband, which contravenes what we have been taught over the last four years at Wellesley."

Still, Mrs. Bush had been selected by a vote of the seniors themselves, and the invitation stood. Alice Walker, the novelist, had received more votes but she said no. Trailing close behind Mrs. Bush in the voting were Whoopi Goldberg, Glenn Close, and Connie Chung. Unlike her husband two years later, she managed to benefit from a divided opposition.

Her speech was closely followed in the press and generally judged to be a success. If nothing else, her gentle tone disarmed any protesters. It was so gentle indeed that lots of people failed to see how pointed her remarks were.

The graduates would face at least three big choices in life, she told them. The first choice was to devote themselves to something larger than themselves. The second was to live their lives with joy.

So far so normal. Alice Walker would have said the same. The third choice, though, had to do with where in their hierarchy of values they



Barbara Bush called into question the feminists' faith in careerism. Her words were likely the most subversive that could be uttered, then or now, on a college campus.

would place obligations of family, friendship, and work. Everyone knew where Barbara Bush, devoted wife and mother, had chosen to place her priorities. The passage was quoted often in the weeks that followed but merits reprinting at length:

The third choice that must not be missed is to cherish your human connections: your relationships with family and friends. For several years, you've had impressed upon you the importance to your career of dedication and hard work, and, of course, that's true. But as important as your obligations as a doctor, lawyer, or business leader will be, you are a human being first and those human connections—with spouses, with children, with friends—are the most important investments you will ever make. At the end of your life, you will never

regret not having passed one more test, not winning one more verdict, or not closing one more deal. You will regret time not spent with a husband, a child, a friend, or a parent. . . . Whatever the era, whatever the times, one thing will never change: Fathers and mothers, if you have children—they must come first.

These seemingly anodyne, Hallmark-y words, when taken seriously, are the most subversive words that could be uttered, then or now, on a college campus—a place where subversive words are supposed to be prized and protected but often aren't. Mrs. Bush's subversion wasn't a matter of left or right, or even of feminism or traditionalism. She cut much deeper, into an American faith that transcends political categories.

This is the faith of careerism. For generations, career had been the guiding light of the bourgeois American male. Work came before family, even if work was done in service of family, as many men told themselves it was. The result was that fathers and mothers of the broad middle class lived separate lives: men at work, women at home to attend to domestic matters, kids above all.

Mrs. Bush understood that this division of labor, enforced through countless social customs and economic arrangements, was manifestly unfair to women who wanted something different, and no decent person could object to dismantling the barriers that stood in the way of their ambitions. But in this otherwise admirable goal, Mrs. Bush suggested, the advocates of women's equality overshot. They went beyond making materialism an option to making it an expectation, perhaps even mandatory. They fell for the great lie at the heart of American business and professional life as men had lived it: that a single-minded pursuit of professional

success was the surest source of personal fulfillment.

The lie was well known to be a lie. By 1990, we had already accumulated a vast literature about the soullessness of the modern corporation, the emotional poverty of “the organization man,” the terrible spiritual price paid for capitalist conformity. The best of the 1960s rebellion briefly understood this. But then came Reaganism, the valorization of the all-conquering market, the glorification of material advancement. When Mrs. Bush spoke to Wellesley’s class of 1990, many self-declared feminists had fallen hard for the unforgiving materialism of a liberal society and the market economy. Feminism itself got tangled up in a wan and desiccated view of what life is for.

Well, that was then. It was always a “First World problem” anyway, as we call them nowadays. The debate is long behind us. The materialists won. We’re all careerists now, men and women alike. The enormous success of Sheryl Sandberg’s chilling *Lean In* is proof of that. For Sandberg, the worthiest goal in a well-lived life will be found in the steady march through the cubicles of corporate America straight into the CEO’s corner office, or as near to it as you can get. Power is the object—power as successful businessmen have always defined it: lots of money to spend, lots of subordinates to boss around, nice houses, nice vacations, work, work, work ...

To a life understood this way, the fulfillments that Mrs. Bush spoke of can only be incidental. Faithful friendships, a happy marriage, and the rearing of children might be pleasant adornments, as they were to the organization man, but their importance can’t be allowed to threaten life’s supreme goal. The self-denial required by a wholehearted devotion to them—on the part of men no less than women—costs too much in personal autonomy. Hence our declining birthrate, our declining marriage rate, the growing cohort of people who live alone.

It is good to be reminded of the Wellesley address, even on such a sad occasion, for it stands as an anticipa-

tory rebuke to *Lean In* and the depleted idea of life that *Lean In* celebrates. To younger ears, Mrs. Bush’s speech must

sound as remote as the transcripts of the Salem witch trials. We mourn the loss of the voice that uttered it. ♦

COMMENT ♦ BARTON SWAIM

Chick-fil-A and the Christian infiltration

Even the headline of the short essay in the *New Yorker* was meant to offend, and it did: “Chick-fil-A’s Creepy Infiltration of New York City.” The piece, by Dan Piepenbring, has been read, attacked, defended, and ridiculed by far more people than ordinarily read the *New Yorker*. If the editors’ goal was to attract online readers, they succeeded.

Piepenbring makes no effort to veil his contempt for the famously clean and friendly fast-food restaurant, of which there are now four in Manhattan. He visited the grand opening of the largest and most recently built one, on Fulton Street in Lower Manhattan. “The air smelled fried,” he writes. And yet

New York has taken to Chick-fil-A. One of the Manhattan locations estimates that it sells a sandwich every six seconds, and the company has announced plans to open as many as a dozen more storefronts in the city. And yet the brand’s arrival here feels like an infiltration, in no small part because of its pervasive Christian traditionalism. Its headquarters, in Atlanta, are adorned with Bible verses and a statue of Jesus washing a disciple’s feet. Its stores close on Sundays. Its C.E.O., Dan Cathy, has been accused of bigotry for using the company’s charitable wing to fund anti-gay causes, including groups that oppose same-sex marriage. The company has since reaffirmed its intention to “treat every person with honor, dignity and respect,” but it has quietly continued to donate to anti-L.G.B.T. groups.

Piepenbring leaves us to wonder many things, including why someone who doesn’t like a restaurant should

be annoyed that it closes on Sundays. He goes on:

The restaurant’s corporate purpose still begins with the words “to glorify God,” and that proselytism thrums below the surface of the Fulton Street restaurant, which has the ersatz homespun ambiance of a megachurch. David Farmer, Chick-fil-A’s vice-president of restaurant experience, told BuzzFeed that he strives for a “pit crew efficiency, but where you feel like you just got hugged in the process.” That contradiction, industrial but claustral, is at the heart of ... Chick-fil-A’s entire brand.

Whatever else may be said about Piepenbring, he’s not a bad writer. “Industrial but claustral” is an apt phrase, provided one takes the latter adjective to mean “suggestive of a cloister or religious house” rather than “confining or enveloping.” It’s hard to think of a less confining or enveloping place than Chick-fil-A.

What shocked many readers of the essay, other than its sheer animosity and the author’s raw detestation of Chick-fil-A’s cow ads (“in which one farm animal begs us to kill another in its place”), was his idea that the restaurant chain is somehow “infiltrating” a city of 8.5 million people that prides itself on its bewilderingly diverse array of cultures and lifestyles. The restaurant’s expansion in Manhattan, he writes, “raises questions about what we expect from our fast food, and to what extent a corporation can join a community.”

Of course, it raises no such questions. New Yorkers are very lefty in their politics; Chick-fil-A’s owners are Southerners with strong Christian convictions.

But New Yorkers are mostly grownups, too, and they're capable of coping with this slight dissonance.

Leave aside the animus, though, and Piepenbring has a point. He sounds a touch paranoid, like 16th-century English Protestants murmuring about Jesuit insurrectionists, but he's not wrong to find something strangely incursive about evangelical Christianity. Not every one of the company's employees is a Christian—far from it I would think—but it closes on Sundays in deference to the Fourth Commandment, and the friendliness of its servers isn't so different from what you'd find in a Baptist church in Georgia. That Chick-fil-A radiates a kind of evangelical warmth is undeniable.

The franchise Piepenbring visited, as it happens, is on almost the very spot of a much earlier infiltration by evangelical Christianity. Just a block to the east on Fulton Street—you can walk there in a minute or two—was once the site of the North Dutch Church. Jeremiah Calvin Lanphier was sent to the church as a lay missionary in 1857. Then as now, the area was dominated by the financial industry and inhabited mainly by bankers and stock traders, very few of whom were interested in church attendance. Lanphier made the counterintuitive decision to announce a lunch-hour prayer meeting: From 12:00 to 1:00 there would be prayer. He distributed announcements and told as many people as he spoke to.

On the first day, September 23, 1857, no one came for the first half-hour; then six people trickled in, and they prayed. The following week, 20 people came and prayed. On October 7 Lanphier recorded in his journal: "Prepared for the prayer-meeting today, at noon. Called to invite a number of persons to be present. Spoke to men as I met them in the street, as my custom is, if I can get their attention. I prayed that the Lord would incline many to come to the place of prayer. Went to the meeting at noon. Present between thirty and forty." Lanphier and his fellow sup-

plicants decided to meet every day. A week later he recorded: "Attended the noon-day prayer meeting. Over one hundred present, many of them not professors of religion, but under conviction of sin, and seeking an interest in Christ; inquiring what they shall do to be saved."

By the spring of 1858 there were thousands attending, so many that the North Dutch Church couldn't contain them, and other churches were opened during the noon hour. The Fulton Street Revival, as it became known, spread to other parts of Manhattan and Jersey City and eventually to Philadelphia and parts of the Midwest. The movement wasn't sectarian and seems



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to have involved nothing more than people praying aloud in the extemporaneous manner of evangelical Christianity. The meetings lasted for a year, then waned, though many Americans in the Northeast would later trace their conversions to prayer meetings attended in the year 1858. Many of the men would die on Southern battlefields a few years later.

Spontaneous prayer meetings are a very different thing from a friendly, chicken-themed fast-food franchise, I acknowledge. But both are discernibly evangelical, and I wondered if the news media and intellectuals of 1858 reacted in some way comparable to the *New Yorker's* passive-aggressive denunciation. Lanphier in his journal mentions that the editors of several news dailies asked to meet with him; there must have been some reaction.

A little searching brought me to an editorial leader in the *New York Times* (the paper was then only a few years old) in which the editors tried fairly to assess this strange new upsurge in evangelical religiosity. They were evidently uncomfortable with dealing with the subject of religion at all: "The region of a man's religious impulses does not usually belong to the editor's field," they wrote. "We fear the effect of publicity on such delicate matters, and, in dread of both hypocrisy and fanaticism, the greatest subject which can agitate the human mind is usually dropped from our columns." But, they went on, they couldn't help noticing what had been happening in the area of Fulton Street and associating it with religious movements elsewhere in the country. "The great wave of religious excitement which is now sweeping over the nation, is one of the most remarkable movements since the Reformation," they reflected.

Churches are crowded; bank directors' rooms become oratories; school-houses are turned into chapels; converts are numbered in the scores of thousands. In this City, we have beheld a sight which not the most enthusiastic fanatic for church-observances could have hoped to look upon;—we have seen in a business quarter of the City, in the busiest hours, assemblies of merchants, clerks and working-men, to the number of some 5,000, gathered day after day for a simple and solemn worship. Similar assemblies we find in other portions of the City; a theatre is turned into a chapel; churches of all sects are open and crowded by day and night.

The *Times's* editors eventually worked themselves into a positive assessment of the Fulton Street phenomenon. The principles adopted by the newly zealous, they concluded, "can but tend to make citizens more loyal, merchants more honest, men and women nobler, kinder, more just, and generous, and brave, in all the concerns of life." But it's clear that they had no intention of attending one of these meetings themselves, any more than Dan Piepenbring would dine at a Chick-fil-A for a reason other than to write a piece for the *New Yorker*.

The sort of simple and open Christian devotion expressed by the supplicants of 1858, and merely hinted at by the cheerful servers of chicken sandwiches in 2018, is always and everywhere slightly out of place. Piepenberg

is basically right to see it as an infiltration. The urbane and forward-thinking commentariat always find it so—alien, gauche, vaguely menacing.

To them it smells fried. To others it smells of life. ♦

COMMENT ♦ PHILIP TERZIAN

It would be nice if they survive, but are newspapers necessary?

Writers and editors at the *Denver Post* recently did what more than a few journalists have only dreamed of doing: They denounced their proprietor in the pages of the *Denver Post*. So audacious was their action that the gesture made the front page of the *New York Times*, which reported approvingly that the *Post* “is in open revolt against its owner” and “pulled no punches” in its week-end Perspective section: “News matters,” read the *Post* headline: “Colo[rado] should demand the newspaper it deserves.”

The immediate cause of the newsroom rebellion was a familiar one. The *Post*’s owner, a New York-based hedge fund called Alden Global Capital, had demanded significant staff reductions and the *Post*’s editorial-page editor asked, in an impassioned essay, whether “these heartbreaking instructions . . . represent the beginning of the end” for the *Post*. Then he issued a challenge: If the “vulture capitalists” at Alden Global aren’t “willing to do good journalism here, [they] should sell the *Post* to owners who will.”

I should acknowledge, at this juncture, that while I tend to believe journalists ought to refrain from biting the hands that feed them—and that includes subscribers as well as proprietors—I have no idea which side

is right or wrong in this matter. It is entirely possible that, in the new digital age, Denver cannot sustain a plentifully staffed metropolitan daily newspaper—the *Post*’s principal competitor, the



The fact is that newspapers are not just a relatively recent invention but for some time ‘our grand democratic experiment’ progressed reasonably well without them.

Rocky Mountain News, closed its doors a decade ago—and it is equally possible that Alden Global Capital, in distant New York, is merely draining as much Colorado cash as it can.

Yet I have my suspicions: The editor issued a plea for what amounts to a benefactor—“It’s time for those . . . who care most about their civic future to get involved and see to it that Denver gets the newsroom it deserves”—which sounds more like philanthropy than business.

The problems of the *Post* may be unique to Denver, or to Alden Global Capital. Still, I couldn’t help but notice that the substance of the news staff’s argument is a well-known one, repeated everywhere old media is imperiled:

A flagship local newspaper . . . plays a critically important role in its city and state . . . and stands as a lighthouse reflective . . . of—and accountable to—a community’s values and goals. A news organization like ours ought to be seen . . . as a necessary public institution vital to the very maintenance of our grand democratic experiment.

This sentiment is so familiar—and so frequently repeated and enshrined in the trade—that it prompts an obvious question: Is it true? Historically, newspapers like the *Post* have played an important role in the lives of their communities and have certainly wielded influence. But just as quantity is scarcely a measure of distinction, power is not necessarily an emblem of quality. Some newspapers are better than others, in terms both of intrinsic value and their contribution to “our grand democratic experiment.” Others—and I can think of a few—cannot be described so charitably.

In fact, in broad historical terms, the *Post*’s case requires a discomfiting footnote. The fact is that newspapers are not just a relatively recent invention—large metropolitan dailies like the *Post* scarcely existed before the Civil War—but for some time “our grand democratic experiment” progressed reasonably well without them. This is not to say that we would benefit from their absence. I am an old newspaperman myself and wish the *Post* well. But it is to suggest that connecting the survival of American democracy to the health of newspapers amounts to special pleading.

For the truth is that the implications of digital technology—for journalism, at any rate—have yet to be realized, much less understood. It used to be argued that the invention of the printing press in the 15th century was vital to the advancement of Western civilization. And of course, in a sense, it was. Printing certainly expanded the scope of literacy in Europe and hastened the course of the Reformation, a good thing, in my opinion. But as Kenneth Clark once argued, “Fifth-century Greece

and 12th-century Chartres and early 15th-century Florence got on very well without it, and who shall say that they were less civilized than we are?"

Similarly, while democracy is enhanced by institutions like daily newspapers, it is not dependent on them—and derives from a variety of basic elements in society: education, morality, the rule of law, freedom of conscience. The First Amendment makes the existence and prosperity of newspapers possible, but "freedom . . . of the press" is a general proposition, not a specific prescription. How that freedom is practiced, how it manifests itself commercially, is left unmentioned.

Technology giveth and taketh away, and the effects of technology in times of transition such as ours are seldom obvious. In the 1950s it was confidently assumed that television would revolutionize education. No one guessed that, in the long run, TV's

effect on learning would be baleful while its influence on politics would be profound. Similarly, the irony of the digital age is that while the Internet has radically expanded the media landscape, such expansion has inevitably generated painful costs. Information is accessible, knowledge is instantaneous, and communication is ubiquitous. But certain knowledge can be dangerous, much information is misinformation, and some communication is better left unsaid.

More to the point, the economic value of newspapers remains a question mark. To the extent that news-

papers are assets to communities—informing the public, encouraging debate, holding errant public officials to account—they refresh democracy. But their function has been slowly and relentlessly supplanted and, like the arts, may someday be largely dependent on patronage.

We may not like the look and sound of new media, but democracy, like capitalism, destroys as well as creates. For every daily newspaper that has lately disappeared, dozens of alternative voices have emerged. The survival of the *Denver Post* would be nice, but is it necessary? ♦

COMMENT ♦ WILLIAM KRISTOL

November 7, 2018

Political observers are understandably focused on November 6, 2018—Election Day. What happens then will be important for the next couple of years: a Democratic wave, carrying that party to control of the House for the first time since 2010, and perhaps even to a majority in the Senate? A strong Republican showing, in which Donald Trump again surprises the experts? A mixed result? And what of the governors and state legislatures?

The outcome of the 2018 electoral contests will have consequences on matters ranging from public policy to the possibility of impeachment. There will be other political implications too, for example for redistricting after the 2020 census. And of course new and rising stars will emerge, and others formerly on the ascendant will fall.

But there's reason to look ahead as well to the first Wednesday in November. On Wednesday, November 7, the two-year presidential cycle begins in earnest and will quickly come to dominate the conversation.

Much of the attention will turn to the mad scramble for the Democratic nomination. But it will also mark a new moment and a potential inflection point for Republicans.

Since Election Day 2016, we Republicans have been preoccupied with the question of Donald Trump: How did he win the nomination and the election? How pleased, ambivalent, or horrified are we by his standing as leader of the party and president of the country? What do we think of his various decisions, achievements, appointments, and tweets? The discussion of Donald Trump, though, has been almost entirely retrospective or contemporaneous.

All that changes on November 7, when the conversation becomes, in part at least, prospective. The question Republicans will have to begin considering becomes far less "Do you approve or disapprove of what Trump is doing?" It becomes instead "Do you want four more years of Trump?"

Clearly a chunk of the GOP primary electorate will answer that question yes. Trump has a loyal base. But polling—and the 2016 primaries—suggest there are as many reluctant Trump supporters or hesitant Trump approvers as there are enthusiasts. An April 15-17 YouGov survey found that 20 percent of adults strongly approve of Trump's job performance and 18 percent somewhat approve. In SurveyMonkey's most recent weekly tracking poll (April 12-18), 23 percent of adults

Worth Repeating from *WeeklyStandard.com*

'You have to get past the pee-pee part of the story to see those rather more significant allegations. James Comey seems not to have done so. Instead he harps on the awkwardness of being the guy who has to tell Trump that his antics might be on tape. Comey treated his new boss-to-be not as an outrageous usurper but like a naughty overgrown child who needed to be quieted. That means Comey either never read past the first goofily salacious pages of the dossier, or he didn't believe it.'

—Eric Felten,
*'What James Comey's Book
Doesn't Say Says a Lot'*

strongly approved and 21 percent somewhat approved his performance. Historical data from both pollsters suggests that some of Trump's supporters have been ambivalent about him since the beginning of his presidency.

The focus on Trump's base obscures this ambivalence among Republicans. Those reluctant or ambivalent Trump supporters are the key to the Republican future. They may stick with Trump going forward. Or they may not. Add to them the 15 or 20 percent of Republicans who don't

approve of Trump and you would have a majority of the party feeling queasy about a second term for the president.

Much will depend, obviously, on how the Trump presidency is faring, what the real-world results look like, what Robert Mueller finds, who steps forward to challenge Trump, and



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many other variables. But they are ... variables. And Trump's fate is therefore more variable than might be suggested by snapshots showing him with wide approval among Republicans.

In politics generally, snapshots are misleading. Political life is more theater than photography. We're early in

Act Two of the Trump term. And the inflection points tend to come about halfway through the drama. Situations change, fortunes rise and fall, characters make fateful choices, and new paths are charted.

The drama of Donald Trump's rise to domination of the Republican party and the American political scene has featured no shortage of surprises. It would seem unlikely that the next couple of years will be any less eventful or unpredictable.

In *Macbeth* we see the apparently immovable Birnam Wood march on Dunsinane, and in the *Winter's Tale* the apparently deceased Queen Hermione come back to life. And life does sometimes imitate art. Is it beyond imagining that a large enough segment of a so far apparently intimidated Republican party could come back to life and—to shift here from Shakespeare to Churchill—"by a supreme recovery of moral health and martial vigor ... arise again and take [a] stand for freedom as in the olden time?" ♦

Workforce Investments Must Start Early

THOMAS J. DONOHUE

PRESIDENT AND CEO
U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

As technology and innovation continue to move our economy into the future, businesses of all sizes and sectors face a growing shortage of skilled workers to fill open positions. This challenge is felt more acutely than ever today, with unemployment low and the labor market increasingly tight. While much of the conversation about solving this challenge centers, rightfully, on workforce training and higher education, new data remind us that a long-term solution also requires a renewed focus on reading and math skills throughout the education pipeline.

Earlier this month, the U.S. Department of Education released the results of the 2017 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also known as our National Report Card. The test, which measures reading and math skills, has been administered to 4th and 8th graders once every two

years for the past 50 years. The latest results, unfortunately, show a decline in performance since the previous NAEP assessment, with over half of 4th graders scoring below grade level in both reading and math.

Equally disheartening, results reveal a widening of the achievement gap between traditionally high-performing and at-risk students. The most disadvantaged children experienced a sizeable decline in their 4th grade reading scores, with the poorest states and districts performing the worst. Further, only 13% of black students and 20% of Hispanic students are able to do math at grade level in 8th grade.

To provide pathways to opportunity for all Americans, businesses—along with government, nonprofit organizations, and other stakeholders—must join in the quest for a solution. To transform our education pipeline, we must invest in students earlier in their lives. Studies show that the foundation for skill development is laid in the first five

years of a child's life. Participation in high-quality early education can help ensure that all students start kindergarten ready to learn and thrive.

The U.S. Chamber Foundation is helping lead the business community's efforts to invest in high-quality education for children from birth through graduation and solve workforce and talent development challenges around the country.

Supporting all children throughout the pipeline is critical to reversing the trends revealed in the latest NAEP results. This is critical not just to our economy but to the strength of American society more broadly. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the U.S. Chamber Foundation will continue exploring policies and initiatives that encourage businesses to support working families, bolster our future workforce, and invest in the American Dream.



Learn more at
uschamber.com/abovethefold.

Trump's State

Can West Virginia Republicans take down Joe Manchin? BY FRED BARNES

Coal isn't what it used to be in West Virginia, but its grip on the state's politics has lingered. Of the three major Republican candidates for the Senate, one blocked President Obama's effort to shut down coal mining, another says coal is a "God-given resource" designed for human use, and the third is a coal baron who spent a year in prison for safety violations after a 2010 explosion in a mine he owned killed 29 miners.

A generation or two ago, West Virginia was a one-issue state—coal. That's no longer true. There are a bit over 20,000 coal miners today, fewer than half the number there were in the early 1970s and a far cry from the peak of 125,000 miners in 1950. But coal is still on the state's mind. When President Obama sought to kill off what was left of the industry on environmental grounds, and Hillary Clinton declared miners would be losing their jobs, the state rebelled.

Almost overnight, West Virginia became a Republican state and Trump country. Since walloping Clinton 69 percent to 26 percent in 2016, the president has anointed West Virginia as his favorite state. He's visited four times since the election, each time to the heaviest coal region in the southern counties of the state.

The GOP takeover is evident in the Senate primary on May 8. Three candidates—all political heavyweights—are roughly tied in the race to challenge Democratic senator Joe Manchin, whose popularity has been slipping.

When Trump appeared at an event in White Sulphur Springs in early April, he went out of his way

to criticize Manchin. "I thought he would be helpful because he talks [that way]," Trump said. "But he votes against everything. And he voted against the tax cuts" and opposed the repeal of Obamacare.

Two of the Republican candidates—Attorney General Patrick Morrisey and Congressman Evan Jenkins—flanked Trump on the dais. The third,



Patrick Morrisey

mine owner Don Blankenship, didn't attend. He was released from prison in 2017, is still on probation, and lives in a mansion in Las Vegas.

Morrisey, 50, is the most impressive of the candidates. West Virginia has lost population in recent years. But Morrisey migrated *into* the state in 2006. "I bought a house and fell in love with the state," he told me. "It was not a life plan." He had run unsuccessfully for the U.S. House in 2000 from his home state of New Jersey. He has fared better in West Virginia. In 2012, he defeated five-term incumbent Darrell McGraw, a Democrat, for attorney general and became the first Republican AG of West Virginia since 1933. He won reelection in 2016.

His impact on the state has been palpable. He has recruited a team of top-notch assistant AGs from around the country. Three are former Supreme Court law clerks. One of them, Tom

Johnson, was recently appointed general counsel of the Federal Communications Commission.

Morrisey's greatest success has been in court. He was an architect of the effort to halt the Obama-era Clean Power Plan from going into effect. The plan threatened to wipe out coal mining, but a historic stay by the Supreme Court stopped it, at least for now.

And last week, the Drug Enforcement Administration issued a regulation to stop pill dumping, which had allowed opioids to flood the state and spur a drug epidemic. Again, Morrisey was responsible. A lawsuit by the AG's office prompted the DEA to act. "West Virginia is ground zero of the opioid crisis," Morrisey's Republican rival says. Correctly.

Jenkins, 57, raised the opioid issue with Trump in 2017 when he flew back to Washington from the Boy Scout Jamboree aboard Air Force One. For 20 years, Jenkins was a Democratic member of the state legislature before switching parties in 2013. The next year, he ousted 19-term House member Nick Rahall, a Democrat. Rahall became "the second-longest serving congressman ever defeated in a general election," Jenkins says.

He has tied himself closely to Trump, having endorsed him just before the West Virginia primary in May 2016. He says Morrisey was a reluctant Trump supporter who balked at voting for him at the GOP convention. "He drove the Trump people crazy," Jenkins says. That means Morrisey was like millions of other Republicans, arriving late in Trump World.

In White Sulphur Springs, Trump polled the crowd on their preference between Jenkins and Morrisey. Jenkins got louder applause, but Morrisey explained to Trump that was because they were in Jenkins's congressional district.

Blankenship, 68, comes from a different universe from Morrisey and Jenkins. He's richer, with an estimated net worth of \$40 million. A coal executive for 30 years, he left the state after the mine explosion and returned last year

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TOM WILLIAMS / CQ / ROLL CALL / GETTY

after his release from prison. He had been convicted of conspiracy to violate mine safety and health standards.

The conviction is the basis for his campaign. He blames President Obama for his prosecution and jail term, and for trying to kill coal. He's eager to take advantage of the state's antipathy to Obama.

Will this strategy work? Probably not, but nobody knows for certain. Primary polls are unreliable. Blankenship has one thing working for him—money. And he's used it wisely on TV ads, which are well produced. Still, the best guess is there aren't many Republicans willing to vote for an ex-con. Besides, he couldn't beat Manchin.

Jenkins and Morrissey could. Jenkins's district is Democratic country. Manchin has to do very well there or it's curtains. Jenkins would keep Manchin from rolling up the votes. And Jenkins would get help from Trump. West Virginia is the one state where he may be able to steer voters to a candidate other than himself. Plus Trump loves to go there and detests Manchin.

The case for Morrissey is more subtle. He should benefit from the fact that primary turnout is small and dominated by conservatives. Morrissey has statewide name recognition. He ought to present a strong contrast with Manchin, conservative vs. liberal. Jenkins, after voting with Manchin in the legislature for years, cannot match Morrissey on that.

Morrissey lacks one indispensable thing: a campaign issue that stirs voters, that brings them out of their seats. To beat Manchin, that's what is needed. Manchin is a very skillful politician. He's "a sincere Bill Clinton," says Steve Law of the Senate Leadership Fund. Or maybe he's just learned how to pretend.

Manchin has a big, bleeding flaw. While West Virginia was falling and coal was in jeopardy, Manchin took a pass. He was no help. He was hobnobbing with Hillary Clinton and going to meetings of the Chuck Schumer leadership team. There's a long list of words to describe his position, starting with beatable. ♦

Unfair to Whom?

The White House aims at Chinese trade practices, hits Americans. **BY MICHAEL WARREN**

As far as Internet comments go, the public responses to the Trump administration's forthcoming action against unfair Chinese trade practices are a pleasure to read. The subject matter—a proposal to levy a 25 percent tariff on a list of imports from China, as permitted under section 301 of the U.S. Trade Act of 1974—is pretty dry. But that helps weed out a lot of the trolls, as does the fact that commenters are required to provide their full names, addresses, and other identifying information. There's a charm to informed citizens earnestly engaging with their government, even if it's nearly certain the administration is preparing to plow ahead on the tariffs anyway.

Still, the comments are illuminating in the way they underscore the global reach of seemingly small players in the American economy. Alan Wilson of Kila, Montana, owns a company that sells and services plastic-molding machinery. His comment is respectful, nuanced, and concerned about how the administration's actions could affect his business. "Currently we sell and service a Chinese machine for the past 10 years, with some success keeping our remaining customers competitive with these machines," Wilson writes. "This will penalize our companies to pay additional money for equipment they already agreed to, hurting our citizens not China. So please review and [provide an] exemption on items ordered prior to any new tax or tariff."

Here's another, from Christopher

Kinney of Oxford, Georgia. "We have been operating our small business, Sky Electronics, selling electromechanical relays . . . for more than 30 years. We contract manufacture in China and sell these relays here in the United States. Your proposed 25% tariff on the relays we import would have a devastating effect on our business. Most of these relays are a commodity item

and we would be at an immediate cost disadvantage if this duty took effect," Kinney writes. "I don't know what you are trying to do implementing these tariffs but the result would be the loss of many small businesses here in the United States."

"I work at a commodity import company that supplies steel nuts to the

industrial market," writes Chuck Halpin of Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania. "The products we sell are not intellectual property, technology transfer or innovation. The inclusion of these types of commodity products in the tariff undermine the general intent of the tariff. This action interrupts the supply of the commodity product, increases pricing and may hinder manufacturing in the US as supply dwindles. This type of low cost product is not where the US will build its [sic] manufacturing base and the interruption of supply hurts everyone."

The comment period lasts through May 11, after which the law requires a public hearing and a shorter round of post-hearing comments. The administration is moving forward regardless. "We've been hearing from the very same small businesses for years about how China's unfair trade practices have been harming them, and this



Larry Kudlow

Michael Warren is a senior writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

president has been willing to stand up and help them,” says Clete Willems, a senior adviser at the White House on trade. “Everyone gets that there’s a larger picture here and that the path that we’re on is unsustainable.”

Robert Lighthizer, the U.S. trade representative (USTR), told Congress in March that the administration had used an algorithm to determine which Chinese products to include on its list so as to “maximize the pressure on China and minimize the pressure on U.S. consumers.” A big chunk of that list of more than 1,300 imports facing the new tariff consists of industrial inputs and commodities—steel nuts, machine tools, ball and roller bearings, transistors, and conveyor belts, to name a few. The White House says the harm to American businesses dealing in such products is far outweighed by the relief that the overall economy, and other firms, would receive from a change in Chinese trade practices.

“It’s a strategy we’ve pursued because we think it’s in the long-term interest of our entire economy, and those people who today rely on sourcing from China may tomorrow be the victims of China’s industrial policy. We are trying to position our economy for long-term success here,” says Willems.

The impetus behind these particular tariffs can be found in a 180-plus-page report released by the USTR on March 22. In the report, the result of a thorough investigation into unfair practices by China, the administration demonstrates how China breaks World Trade Organization rules and international laws to disadvantage American firms and even threaten the national security of the United States. For one, China’s command-and-control economy restricts foreign investment to companies willing to transfer their proprietary technology to state-controlled entities, in violation of World Trade Organization rules. China also limits the ability of American companies to set reciprocal licensing terms with Chinese companies. To do business in China, you’ve got to play ball by their rules.

And then there’s the outright theft of American technology. The USTR

report cites a number of instances that show cybertheft by Chinese entities is a critical part of Beijing’s industrial policy. One cybersecurity firm, the report notes, found in 2013 that a division of China’s People’s Liberation Army was stealing data “from at least 141 organizations, 115 of which are based in the United States, representing 20 major business sectors. The victims of these intrusions match industries that China has identified as strategic priorities, including four of the seven ‘strategic emerging industries’ that China identified in its 12th Five-year Plan.”

Within the Trump administration, there is consensus, officials say, about the need to address these unfair trade practices. But about *how* to address it? White House aides admit there have been disagreements. One of the central players was Gary Cohn, the chairman of the National Economic Council who resigned earlier this year. His influence continues in the administration’s efforts to push more aggressively to settle disputes within the WTO. But Cohn strongly opposed tariffs as the first tool to change Chinese behavior. His chief opponent was Peter Navarro, Trump’s top trade adviser and perhaps the strongest advocate in the White House for protectionist policies. It’s clear who won that dispute.

Cohn was replaced at the NEC by another ostensible free trader, Larry Kudlow, who has spent his first few weeks on the job trying to calm financial markets every time the president announces or suggests new protectionist measures. On April 4, his third day at the White House and only hours after the administration released its list of Chinese products facing the 25 percent duty, Kudlow trotted out to the cable news cameras as markets recoiled from the list and China issued threats of retaliatory tariffs on American agriculture exports. “I doubt if there will be any concrete action for several months,” he said, looking like Leslie Nielsen’s police detective in *The Naked Gun*, waving off onlookers in front of a comically exploding building by telling them there’s “nothing to see here.”

Kudlow’s scrambling response reflects the still-raging split about the fundamental point of these actions targeting the Chinese trade regime. White House aides insist the tariffs are a tool, a means to an end where China acts fairly. “We hope at the end of the day that China comes to the table and the tariffs aren’t necessary,” says Clete Willems. “We hope this will actually lead to a situation where China, once and for all, takes us seriously and changes its behavior.”

Navarro is much more confident that tariffs would simply benefit the U.S. economy. “If you think about the trade issue, ultimately I think it’s really a good thing for the market that we are doing these kinds of trade actions,” he said on CNBC on April 2. In a *Wall Street Journal* op-ed in March of 2017, Navarro argued that reducing the trade deficit will help reduce foreign investment in the United States, which he claims represents Warren Buffett’s ominous concept of “conquest by purchase” by foreign governments, chiefly China. A reduction in foreign investment, then, means more domestic investment by American manufacturers. Tariffs, for Navarro, are not simply about curbing unfair trade practices—they’re an end in themselves, a chance to stand athwart the globalizing economy, yelling stop.

Hearing this kind of stuff makes the large number of free-traders on the White House staff cringe—but it also speaks directly to President Trump’s own perception of what ails America’s economy. The result is a confused policy, trying to marry the concept of fair but open trade to the Trump-Navarro protectionist ethic.

The public commenters on the new tariffs seem confused as well. Tom Phillips of Jacksonville, who fears they could devastate his small business, says his company imports Chinese air conditioning parts to assemble in the United States. “I thought the issue was theft of intellectual property,” Phillips writes in his public comment. “I don’t understand why the Tariff code for air conditioning parts is being included in this regulation.” ♦

Vacancy at State

Senate Democrats try to block Pompeo.

BY JENNA LIFHITS

Mike Pompeo wants to be secretary of state. But the deck is stacked against him.

One by one, Democrats on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee announced their opposition to his nomination the week of April 16. That included the two who voted to confirm him as CIA director, Virginia senator Tim Kaine and New Hampshire senator Jeanne Shaheen. By midweek, all eyes were on the remaining 13 Democratic senators who helped confirm Pompeo in January 2017.

Several had already come out in opposition, including California senator Dianne Feinstein, who is up for reelection and facing a progressive challenger. “The Secretary of State is a very different role than CIA director, and it’s not the kind of position you learn on the job,” she said in a statement. “I sense a certain disdain for diplomacy in Mike Pompeo that I believe disqualifies him from being our next senior diplomat.”

Others, though, are running for reelection in states Trump won in 2016, and political pressure can cut two ways. Republican senators Tom Cotton and Lindsey Graham both mused aloud about where Indiana senator Joe Donnelly, West Virginia senator Joe Manchin, and North Dakota senator Heidi Heitkamp stood on Pompeo. Cotton and Graham both predicted these senators would vote to confirm him—though all three had been tight-lipped in the halls of the Senate.

“I’m wide open,” said Manchin when

asked about Pompeo’s nomination.

What are the factors that you’re weighing?

“I’m just wide open,” he said with a grin.

Heitkamp took a different tack, insisting to reporters midweek that she had not made up her mind on the nomination.



Mike Pompeo

Pompeo faced some Republican pushback as well. Kentucky senator Rand Paul announced his opposition in March, describing the CIA director as an advocate for regime change.

Republican leaders said that Pompeo would get a floor vote regardless of whether he received a favorable recommendation from the Foreign

Relations Committee on April 23.

On April 19, Heitkamp became the first Democrat to announce her support and shifted the ground of the debate. Even with Paul opposed and Arizona senator John McCain back home receiving medical treatment, her promised “yea” meant Pompeo would have a majority so long as the other 49 Republicans all vote in his favor. But that wasn’t necessarily a given. Arizona senator Jeff Flake said he had unanswered questions, though he wouldn’t mention anything specific. “I’ll need answers before I vote yes,” he said.

Pompeo’s Democratic opponents, meanwhile, said that his “record of favoring military action over diplomacy,” as Connecticut’s Chris Murphy put it, proved that he was not fit to be the nation’s senior diplomat. His attacks on the Iran nuclear deal and his views of executive military action came up time and again during his

April 12 confirmation hearing. Lawmakers also questioned Pompeo’s statements about Muslims and his view of same-sex marriage.

During the hearing, more than one Democratic senator questioned Pompeo’s willingness to stand up to the president. The CIA director is close to Trump, a relationship that developed over months of face-to-face intelligence briefings. Pompeo testified that he has “no discomfort with directness or confrontation” and has always been upfront with the president. Democratic committee members seemed less than convinced.

As if to counter Democrats’ concerns that the CIA director is “anti-diplomacy,” news of Pompeo’s secret trip to North Korea over Easter weekend leaked not long after the hearing. Arkansas’s Tom Cotton, during a call with reporters on April 18, said that the visit undercuts assertions that Pompeo is “too bellicose.” He described the meeting as the “best evidence imaginable that he is committed to diplomacy.”

The State Department remains without a leader amid major national security events, including an upcoming Iran deal-related deadline and talks with North Korea. Democrats acknowledged that concern, but stood by their objections.

“I’m concerned about it being vacant,” Kaine said before adding, “I’m concerned about what message it sends if you put somebody in with a history of sort-of anti-diplomacy rhetoric and statements, anti-Muslim statements.” Asked if he could think of someone more suitable, Kaine demurred.

“I want to make sure the right person is there,” said Connecticut’s Murphy. “If your chief concern was positions being vacant, then you would never look at the merits of candidates.”

Connecticut’s senior senator, Richard Blumenthal, announced his opposition to Pompeo on April 18. “There have to be 10 [candidates more suitable for the position],” he said, “but they probably are not more amenable to Donald Trump.” After pondering for a minute, Blumenthal named retired admiral James Stavridis as someone he

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JIM WATSON / AFP / GETTY

admires and who might also be acceptable to the president.

Even Democrats voting against Pompeo have acknowledged his “clear record of public service,” as Maryland’s Ben Cardin put it, and that he “believes in the power of the State Department,” in Murphy’s words. That is one reason Pompeo’s supporters fumed over the opposition.

“By rejecting Pompeo as a matter of party loyalty, they’re showing that being a Democrat means refusing to let Trump govern,” said one senior Republican congressional adviser. “Full stop. There’s no other excuse.”

Cotton pinned the Democrats’ resistance on “an electoral grudge.” “Fifteen of them voted for him last year. There’s no reason why they shouldn’t vote for him again now,” Cotton said. “The only reason they’re not is because of their blind partisanship and the fact that they are still not over the results of the 2016 election.” The Democratic side of the foreign relations panel, he added, “is not representative of the Senate as a whole.”

Lindsey Graham called Democrats’ opposition to Pompeo a “low point.” “I’m very disappointed in my Democratic colleagues. Clearly, the man is highly qualified. He’s somebody a Republican president would pick,” he said. “Here’s what I can’t get about our Democratic friends: Elections matter when they win. When we win, they don’t.”

Despite the nomination’s polarizing effect, Republican leaders were optimistic even before Heitkamp’s announcement that Pompeo would get the votes he needs. “I can’t imagine, at a time when we’re negotiating in one of the most dangerous and volatile places on the face of the earth, that our Democratic colleagues would deny the president his diplomat in chief,” said Senate majority whip John Cornyn of Texas. “It would seem to be reckless, and I hope they will reconsider.”

The Senate’s number three, John Thune of South Dakota, hoped much the same. “There’s gotta be a few reasonable Democrats that actually think we need a secretary of state,” he said. “Right?” ♦

Google in the Dock

When diversity morphs into discrimination.

BY TERRY EASTLAND

Last year Google, the Mountain View tech giant, told its recruiting staff that certain hires for the third quarter of 2017 must be “all diverse.” That meant all the hires had to be black, Hispanic, or female. None could be a white or Asian-American man.

Not everyone at Google thought well of the “all diverse” demand, not least Arne Wilberg, a recruiter of engi-



neers who told management more than once that such mandates are illegal. In November, after three years of often contentious debate over Google’s hiring policies, Wilberg was discharged for escalating situations with clients, not meeting goals, talking too much in meetings, and not being collaborative—all of which were “pretextual” justifications, as he saw them, meaning that the stated reasons concealed the real ones. In the lawsuit he has now filed in state court in California, Wilberg says he was “an exemplary employee [who] received positive performances until he began opposing illegal hiring and recruiting practices.”

Those practices, he says in his complaint, implemented policies that were “clear and irrefutable . . . memorialized in writing and consistently [used] in practice, of systematically discriminating in favor [of] job applicants who are Hispanic, African American, or female, and against Caucasian and Asian men. These policies were reflected in

multiple bulletins, charts and other documents prepared by Google’s highest-level managers, and approved by Google’s C-level officers and directors.”

The purpose of the policies, the complaint says, was to achieve “diversity” in the Google workforce. Toward that end the company found it expedient to occasionally send emails “instructing its employees [to] purge any and all references to the race/gender quotas from its e-mail database in a transparent effort to wipe out any paper trail of Google’s illegal practices.”

Under California law it is illegal for an employer to discriminate against an employee in the terms, conditions, or privileges of employment, including discharging an employee, because of sex or race. Wilberg contends that Google made decisions based on sex and race that adversely affected him as an employee, including (obviously) the one that terminated his job. There is more in his complaint—Wilberg accuses Google of retaliation in response to his complaint about discriminatory hiring practices—but it may be summarized simply: that Wilberg was discriminated against on grounds of race and sex in multiple ways from the day he began opposing Google’s diversity hiring policies until the day he was fired. He seeks remedies for the particular wrongs and wants to see an end to diversity hiring as pursued in his former workplace and the discrimination it causes.

Google, meanwhile, vows it will defend against the lawsuit. For Google, as for much of corporate America, diversity hiring means hiring people who are members of certain groups that are “historically underrepresented” in a workforce compared with their presence in the general population or some subset of it. It seeks to diversify a workforce by employing more members of

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the underrepresented groups than of the overrepresented ones. If a job seeker is denied the opportunity to compete because of race or sex for a position for which the person is qualified, that would be discrimination, perhaps illegal in the eyes of a court. Likewise, if a job seeker learns that certain hires must be “all diverse” or, as another Google formulation has put it, “diverse-only”—that is a breathtaking quota of 100 percent, and its wholly exclusionary nature, necessarily discriminatory, ought to attract the attention of the California courts, assuming Wilberg has standing to bring his case. Judges have rarely supported explicit quotas. Wilberg’s lawyer declined to comment.

The case is unusual. Plaintiffs in racial-preference cases typically claim to have been discriminated against because of race in their efforts to win a job, or a seat at a college or university, or a public contract. Here, though, Wilberg was not pursuing a job that he says was denied him on grounds of race or sex. And no one has come forward to claim Google discriminated against him during a job search. Even so, judges have been reluctant to recognize “diversity” as a compelling interest justifying race-based preferences in employment. Indeed, sitting *en banc* in the 1996 *Piscataway* case, the Third Circuit rejected that ostensible rationale. *Piscataway* is a federal case, but the state court handling Wilberg may find *Piscataway* useful background reading.

Would a decision in favor of Wilberg change how they hire at Google? The company says it has “a clear policy to hire candidates based on their merit, not their identity.” Google also says it “unapologetically” tries to hire from “a diverse pool of qualified candidates for open roles.” But if what Wilberg says is true, Google is in fact counting and hiring—and discriminating—by race and sex.

The classic definition of discrimination is different treatment of an individual because of the person’s race or sex. Maybe Google will in time get that. But for now, the tech giant is going to court. ♦

Weird Science

PETA is no friend of STEM.

BY WESLEY J. SMITH

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) makes no moral distinctions between humans and animals, believing, as its alpha wolf Ingrid Newkirk put it once, “A rat is a pig is a dog is a boy.” The organization opposes any instrumental use of animals—no matter how beneficial to human thriving—insist-



Sunshine, a woeful lab rat in A Rat’s Life

ing that they are “not ours to eat, wear, experiment on, use for entertainment, or abuse in any other way.”

PETA’s adamant opposition to animal research puts it squarely in the anti-science camp. Not because they are ethically opposed to such experiments—although that marks the group as anti-human in my book—but because the organization routinely slanders animal researchers as cruel and sadistic and persists in its false and dishonest claim that animal research provides no medical or scientific benefit.

Given PETA’s unyielding antipathy to a crucial scientific sector, one might reasonably wonder why the USA Science and Engineering Festival—which touts itself as “the nation’s largest celebration of STEM” (science, technology, engineering, math) would welcome PETA2 (the group’s youth division) to propagandize children against the centrality of animal

research in the medical sciences. But there the group was at the April 7-8 festival in Washington, in booth 1144, pushing an initiative called “the science of saving animals.”

As part of its contribution to the STEM festival, PETA distributed a comic book entitled *A Rat’s Life*, a diatribe against animal research and researchers. The comic first seeks to humanize rats—animal rights groups often anthropomorphize—by stating, for example, “If no one forces them to live in an unclean cage, their skin has a nice perfume-like scent.” PETA forgot to warn the kids not to smell the rodents too closely, as rats can carry dangerous diseases such as leptospirosis, a bacterial infection that can cause serious liver and kidney damage. The comic book also tells its young readers, “Rats are smart, curious, and friendly. They can be as outgoing and gentle as any human.” And they can bite and chew humans, too, though that part didn’t bear mentioning.

Having established that rats are people too, the anti-science propagandizing begins. A girl named Sally introduces herself to Sam and his mother, who have just moved into the neighborhood. Sally has a dog she loves, but Sam has a “rat friend” named Sunshine, who was rescued from a “cruel test at a college in North Carolina” where “she didn’t have a name, just a number.” In the next few panels, the comic seeks to upset its young readers with tales of gruesome research, accompanied by cartoon images of a monkey with its brain exposed and dogs being gassed in military experiments.

Upset by what she has been told, Sally asks, “Isn’t it illegal to test on animals? I saw a movie where animal testing was banned.” Sam replies, “In the real world, animal testing is still allowed. There is no law to stop any

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experiment, no matter how ridiculous or harmful.”

No, Sam: In the real world, animal experiments are closely supervised by ethicists and governed by mandatory rules and voluntary laboratory accreditation guidelines. There have been abuses and mistakes—and when they happen there are often serious legal consequences. But overall, the animal research sector is well regulated and dedicated to the ethical pursuit of important research.

The comic next invokes the authority of Sam’s mother against disease-fighting charities. When Sally mentions she wants to raise money for the American Cancer Society, Mom warns her that the society, the March of Dimes, and the American Heart Association “hurt animals.” She adds, “Animal experiments really won’t help save anyone’s life. In fact, a lot of animals will suffer and die for nothing. Animal testing just uses money that could be spent helping people, not hurting animals.”

To coin a relevant phrase, rat poop. Almost every significant medical breakthrough in recent decades required animal research. Computer programs and cell lines allow a reduced use of animals in research—a good thing—but they certainly don’t eliminate the need. Not only does experimentation on animals—mainly rats and mice, but also larger animals, in more advanced testing—provide basic biological information, but at some point, a new drug, surgery, or more innovative treatments must be tested on living organisms for safety and efficacy before being tried on human beings. After all, if the research is going to cause harm—and sometimes it does—better that it be to rats or monkeys than to human beings.

PETA does what zealots do: It pursues its ideological cause by almost any means short of violence. In that light, *A Rat’s Life* is par for the course. The real mystery is why a proudly STEM-promoting convention—held, in part, to spark a love of science in children—would rent a booth to sworn enemies of biological science so that they could propagandize against that vital goal. ♦

It’s a Start

The strike on Syria.

BY MATTHEW RJ BRODSKY

It is said that a picture is worth a thousand words. In the White House, apparently, it is worth 105 missiles if it shows the suffering of women and children from a lethal combination of sarin and chlorine gas. President Donald Trump’s response, obliterating three chemical-weapons-

will inside the capital of murderous dictator Bashar al-Assad. As a result, it finally puts to rest the absurd notion propagated by the Obama administration and its supporters that the United States couldn’t operate in or over Syria because of Assad’s top-notch Russian-made air defense systems.

There were also ramifications for the use of social media platforms and their place in public diplomacy. In a week in which Facebook founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg was grilled by Congress for creating the preferred fake news platform for those seeking to fix elections, President Trump turned to Twitter to broadcast his intention to rain down fire and fury on Syria, taunt Assad as a “Gas Killing Animal,” and dare Russia to shoot down U.S. missiles.

Twitter came out on top as Trump’s nastygram landed on its intended audience. With a single tweet, the president scattered Russia’s vessels from its Mediterranean port at Tartous, had Assad’s men abandoning their air bases and rapidly relocating air assets near Russian positions, and sent Iran-backed militias, including Hezbollah, scurrying from their posts and hunkering down in safer quarters. America’s enemies rightly fear U.S. military power when Trump dons the hat of commander in chief and wields Twitter like a sword.

On a diplomatic level, the days preceding the airstrikes displayed the speed with which Washington can assemble an international coalition in pursuit of a limited military objective. It also punctured the artificially inflated benefits Russia’s President Vladimir Putin relies upon to sell membership in his club. For years he



The remains of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Center in Damascus, April 14

related facilities in Syria, demonstrated that the United States will not stand idly by when certain chemical weapons (CW) are used against civilians. Coaxing the chemical genie back into the bottle was the right decision even if it came some five-and-a-half years after President Barack Obama declared “a whole bunch of chemical weapons moving around or being utilized” in Syria would constitute a red line.

Beyond its importance in reestablishing some measure of deterrence and degrading the Syrian regime’s ability to use such weapons in the future, the aerial assault demonstrated that the United States is capable of striking at

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has been peddling a myth in the Middle East that he will defend his allies as Washington tosses its own under the bus. Syria is Russia's longest-standing Arab partner, but aside from deploying an army of social media disinformation bots, Putin stood down, even while Washington's commitment to its own allies, such as the Kurds, remains in doubt.

These are all positive developments that went some distance toward reestablishing American credibility when it comes to enforcing red lines. Nevertheless, as the chemical genie now returned to the bottle might say, "Here's the rub." The Obama administration reached an agreement with Russia in 2013 to remove all of Syria's CW, not merely to deter Assad or degrade his ability to use those weapons. It's not even clear today what CW agents President Trump won't tolerate. That leaves the genie with a rather sizable window through which it is bound to escape.

At first glance, it would appear that the use of sarin gas is the issue; it prompted last April's Tomahawk telegram against Assad's al-Shayrat air base after its use in Khan Sheikhoun. But the regime continues to employ other deadly chemicals, such as chlorine. The Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic found that the regime used chlorine several times around Damascus in the past year and confirmed 29 cases of CW use since Obama and Putin's 2013 agreement. In essence, while Barack Obama's line was drawn in disappearing ink, the confusion over Donald Trump's suggests his own line is pink rather than red.

As far as punitive action is concerned, the Trump administration could have done far more to deter Assad in the future. For instance, the United States could have hit his presidential palace in Damascus on Mount Mezzeh, which is just a stone's throw away from the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Center that the coalition struck with 76 missiles. The administration could have combined that strike with a message to Putin as well by leveling Assad's summer

residence and palace in Latakia on the Mediterranean coast, near Russia's Khmeimim air base.

Instead of merely striking at the heart of Assad's CW program, as the Pentagon put it, President Trump could have taken out the rest of the sites associated with CW production, storage, and delivery. He could have further hindered Assad's ability to slaughter the Syrian people by cratering his runways and airfields, destroying his air assets, and targeting what remains of his Soviet-era air defense systems. Of course, such a plan would necessitate the tactical element of surprise to catch Assad's aircraft in their hangars before they were repositioned near Russian assets. That would rule out early-morning Twitter rants that spell out martial stratagems. Such a target set

would further degrade the regime's military capabilities.

The bottom line is that the Trump administration's decision to strike Assad's assets in Syria was the minimum tactical military response the Pentagon put on the table. If it punishes Assad, discourages him from further CW attacks, or degrades his ability to do so should he become insufficiently deterred, then it is a positive development for human civilization and represents a positive result of limited U.S. military action. The next step in Syria is finishing the job against ISIS, recognizing the conventional military threat Iran poses there, and pivoting to the prevention of additional gains by the Islamic Republic in place of the Islamic State. Achieving that with the withdrawal of U.S. forces might be a wish left for another genie. ♦

Who's the Trumpiest?

A spirited GOP primary in North Carolina.

BY DANIEL ALLOTT

Charlotte, N.C.

The middle-aged couple standing in their front yard putting a fresh coat of paint on their two-story colonial doesn't seem all that interested in chatting, but the congressman approaches them anyway.

It's a warm spring Saturday, and I'm tagging along with Robert Pittenger for an afternoon of door-knocking. The three-term congressman is canvassing Republican voters in one of the swankier sections of southeast Charlotte, on the western edge of North Carolina's 9th District.

Pittenger walks up to the couple and, after some small talk, is asked, "Are you going to sort them out in Washington?" I expect a clichéd response—something like, "That's

why I need your support." But Pittenger is feeling sanguine. Since his current term began, the Dow Jones average is up 30 percent and North Carolina's jobless rate is down nearly a point, to 4.5 percent, just above the national rate of 4.1 percent. According to Pittenger's math, the tax cuts Republicans passed in December will give the average North Carolinian a \$2,100 rebate. Bank of America, headquartered a few miles away, celebrated the lowering of the corporate tax rate by issuing \$1,000 bonuses to 145,000 of its employees.

So instead of a pat response, Pittenger says, "We already did." That's the distilled version of the pitch Pittenger is making to his Republican constituents. He's arguing that only 15 months into the Trump era, America is well on its way to becoming great again. It's a straightforward argument to make in a district Donald

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Trump won by 12 points in 2016 and in a state where, according to a January poll, 87 percent of Republicans view the president favorably.

Pittenger is trying to fend off challenger Mark Harris in the May 8 primary. A conservative Charlotte pastor, Harris came within 134 votes of defeating him in 2016. Pittenger and Harris have spent most of the primary campaign engaged in a tedious argument over exactly when each switched his allegiance from another Republican candidate to Trump during the 2016 primaries.

Regardless of when their loyalty to Trump began, both candidates say he is doing a stellar job as president. “Trump has met and exceeded what my expectations and hopes would have been for his presidency,” Harris told me in an interview at his home in Charlotte.

Pittenger, meanwhile, has been one of Trump’s top congressional advocates and defenders. He has called Trump’s leadership “extraordinary,” defended the president’s use of the term “shit-hole countries,” and dismissed allegations of collusion between Trump and Russia as tabloid fodder. In a January op-ed, Pittenger compared Trump to Winston Churchill, Ronald Reagan, and “a diamond with many rough edges.” Trump “is the real thing, not a fake cubic zirconia,” Pittenger wrote. His campaign literature touts his “96% record of voting with President Trump!”

Asked whether he is troubled by the controversies surrounding the Trump administration, Pittenger says no. Stormy Daniels, the Russia investigation, the record-setting White House staff turnover—they’re all a distraction, he says. “The bottom line is the economy, regulation, courts—even if you don’t like [Trump] and disagree with him on policy, he’s been good for the country.”

Harris and Pittenger differ most on fiscal policy. Harris is a fiscal hawk who counts Freedom Caucus

chairman Mark Meadows among his political heroes. Pittenger has no patience for what he views as the rigidity of the Freedom Caucus. In mid-March, Pittenger voted for the \$1.3 billion spending bill, touting its record-setting military spending. Harris, who has never held elective office, opposed the bill, calling it “the polar opposite of good government and conservative values.”

Pittenger’s full embrace of Trump will help him in the rural parts of the 9th District where he performed poorly in the 2016 Republican pri-



Pittenger at a veterans’ convention in Charlotte, July 26, 2016

mary and where Trump remains especially popular. “We have not seen Trump’s support die down at all,” said Phillip Stephens, chairman of the Robeson County Republican party. Trump won Robeson County by 5 points in 2016 after Barack Obama won it by 17 in 2012.

Pittenger finished third in Robeson in 2016 and in six of the other seven counties that make up the district. His sole win came in the densely populated section of Mecklenburg County included in the 9th District. Though he was first elected to the House in 2012, Pittenger struggled in part because court-ordered redistricting in February 2016 gave him just four months to get to know the new district before the primary.

Pittenger has spent the last two years getting better acquainted with his constituents. Last year, facing anger over Obamacare repeal negotiations, many lawmakers avoided town hall meetings with voters.

Pittenger held nine of them, calmly facing down hostile crowds even as he defended Trump.

Pittenger has secured hundreds of millions of dollars in relief for parts of the district still recovering from Hurricane Matthew, which caused massive flooding in October 2016. And he lobbied to have language inserted in the 2018 budget that will help businesses in persistently poor areas become eligible for agriculture grants. Lumberton business leader Bo Biggs said the new funds are “crucial” for revitalizing an area “pummeled by the loss of tobacco and textile industries.”

A March poll gave Pittenger a 32-point lead, although Harris can take some comfort in the poll’s small sample size and the 6 in 10 likely primary voters who hadn’t yet formed an opinion of him.

The tougher test for Pittenger may come in the general election, in which he would likely face Democrat Dan McCready, a 34-year-old solar energy financier and former Marine.

McCready avoids bashing Trump and downplays his party affiliation—“I am a Marine and an American before I’m a Democrat,” he often says.

With his military background and centrist instincts, McCready reminds some local politicians of Conor Lamb, the Democrat who in March won a special election in a Pennsylvania district Trump won by 20 points. Though untested as a candidate, McCready has been a formidable fundraiser. He out-raised Pittenger and Harris combined in 2017, according to FEC reports.

Pittenger’s fate may ultimately hinge on two questions: Can he motivate enough Trump voters to show up to the polls for an election in which the president is not on the ballot? And can he do so without alienating the district’s many unaffiliated voters, whom polling shows have an unfavorable view of the president?

The answers to these questions may provide the best evidence yet of the durability of Trumpism. ♦

Liberal Education and Liberal Democracy

Colleges foster smugness on the left and resentment on the right

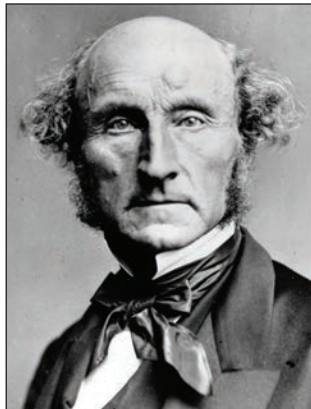
By PETER BERKOWITZ

John Stuart Mill, the outstanding liberal thinker of his age and perhaps of all ages, took up the topic of liberal education in February 1867 in a magnificent and all-but-forgotten inaugural address he delivered to the University of St Andrews as its honorary president. Liberal education, Mill stressed, differs from professional education. Professional education prepares for remunerative work. Liberal education develops “capable and cultivated human beings.” Capable and cultivated for what? For freedom. For flourishing as free individuals. For self-government—that is, for governing oneself and joining in the government of the country.

According to Mill, liberal education furnishes and refines the mind. It furnishes the mind with general knowledge of history and literature, science, economics and politics, morality, religion, and philosophy. It refines the mind by teaching students to grasp the complexities of critical issues and to appreciate the several sides of moral and political questions. In furnishing and refining the mind, liberal education tends to temper judgment, elevate character, and form richer and fuller human beings.

Though different from professional education, liberal education improves the ability of professionals to practice their professions wisely. As Mill observed, “Men may be competent lawyers without general education, but it depends on general education to make them philosophic lawyers who demand, and are capable of apprehending, principles, instead of merely cramming their memory with details.”

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John Stuart Mill, liberal

The idea of “philosophic lawyers” may not immediately evoke the life and legacy of Antonin Scalia. Some may suppose that the very notion would be anathema to Justice Scalia and the originalist jurisprudence he championed. To the contrary.

Scalia was a blistering critic of resorting to moral and political theory to resolve hard cases of constitutional law.

But his criticism of the “living Constitution” and a “moral reading of the Constitution” stemmed from study of the history of Anglo-American jurisprudence and of theories about the proper role of courts in a liberal democracy. The quarrel between originalism and the living Constitution turns on the very sorts of learning and thinking—the thoughtfulness—at the heart of liberal education.

In the summer of 2015, I saw how the spirit of liberal education suffused Scalia’s judicial pedagogy. I accompanied 25 or so college students to a meeting with him at the Supreme Court. They had come to Washington as part of the Hertog Political

Studies Program to study political philosophy, the American political tradition, and domestic and foreign policy. We had an hour with the justice, and at the beginning Scalia stood scowling next to a small lectern. His arms crossed and his brow furrowed, he did not seem pleased.

Scalia began in a gruff tone with a grim hypothetical. “If by some terrible misfortune I should be compelled to leave the United States of America,” he said, to the best of my recollection, “my first priority would be to find a country that protects freedom. I would not search for a bill of rights. As a former law professor who studied comparative constitutional law, I can tell you that the Soviet Union had a long and beautiful bill of rights. It abounded in inspiring promises. Those promises, as you doubtless realize from your study of history, were worthless.”

“Were I to be exiled from my beloved United States of America,” he continued, “I would search for a country

LONDON STEREOGRAPHIC CO. / GETTY

with well-designed political institutions so that the powers of government are dispersed and blended among distinct branches that operate to check and balance one another. This, study of government teaches, is the best means to thwart the abuses of power and invasions of liberty to which those who hold political office have been forever prone.”

Scalia fell silent. He surveyed the students. He discerned that he had startled and even discomfited them by elevating the separation of powers above the Bill of Rights. The first hint of pleasure could be seen on his face.

He invited questions. As the students’ queries grew bolder, Scalia began to enjoy himself.

One student asked, “Justice Scalia, why do you write such harsh dissents? Can you really expect your rhetoric to convince your colleagues?”

Scalia chuckled. “No, I don’t expect my dissents to persuade my colleagues. If I am writing a dissent, it means that I have *failed* to convince a majority of them.”

Smiling now, he added, “I write my dissents the way I do—I try to be lively, hard-hitting, some might say acerbic—for the sake of students. For young men and women like you. I want to wake you up, grab your attention, provoke you to think.”

Rising to the provocation, a student brashly asked the justice to name a case in which his vaunted judicial philosophy yielded a result that conflicted with his political preferences.

Scalia loved it.

“Sure, that’s easy,” he said merrily. “I could name dozens. Among the most dramatic, I suppose, was a 1989 decision, *Texas v. Johnson*, the flag-burning case.”

Scalia pursed his lips, clasped his hands, thought for a moment, then continued with gusto, “Let me tell you something. In the Kingdom of Scalia, flag burning would be banned. But I don’t live in that land. I’m a citizen of the United States who has the privilege to serve as a Supreme Court justice. My job, my duty, is to determine what the Constitution requires, permits, and forbids. Study of the First Amendment’s original meaning reveals that the Constitution gives broad protection to speech, especially political speech, very much including opinions I detest. Constitutional protection extends to what my Court calls ‘expressive conduct.’ For example, burning the flag is conduct that expresses a political opinion—to my mind, a repulsive one, but a political opinion nonetheless. Accordingly, I cast my Court’s fifth vote to uphold the right of United States citizens to desecrate the American flag.”

“Mind you,” Scalia added, grinning mischievously, “my vote in *Texas v. Johnson* came at considerable personal cost. You see, Mrs. Scalia stands watch over the right flank of the Scalia household. For several weeks following my Court’s decision, as she prepared breakfast, she hummed aggressively the ‘Battle Hymn of the Republic.’”

I recount these highlights from the justice’s conversation with students not only because they provide entertaining and instructive glimpses of the man. (And for the historical record, Mrs. Scalia says she did not aggressively

hum the “Battle Hymn of the Republic” but, rather, vigorously waved the American flag at her husband as he sat at the breakfast table.) They also illustrate the importance to legal education of liberal education. To understand the Constitution, you must study not only cases and controversies, but also jurisprudence, history, political theory, competing political traditions, and much more.

Unfortunately, liberal education in America is in bad shape. Our colleges have exposed it to three major threats. They have attacked and curtailed free speech.

They have denigrated and diluted due process. And they have hollowed and politicized the curriculum. These threats are not isolated and independent. They are intertwined. All are rooted in the conceit of infallibility. To remedy one requires progress in remedying all.

FREE SPEECH CURTAILED

From speech codes, trigger warnings, microaggressions, and safe spaces to disinviting speakers and shouting down lecturers, free speech is under assault on college campuses. One reason is that, as polls by Gallup and others show, many students do not understand the First Amendment. And when they learn that it protects offensive and even hateful speech, they dislike it.

Why has free speech fallen out of favor? Many university students, faculty, and administrators suppose there is a fundamental conflict between free speech on one side and diversity and inclusion on the other. The freer the speech, the argument goes, the more pain and suffering for marginalized students. This way of thinking springs from a faulty understanding of free speech and of diversity and inclusion in education.

Yes, words wound. Children learn that from experience. History teaches, however, that beyond certain

Liberal education in America is in bad shape. Our colleges have exposed it to three major threats. They have attacked and curtailed free speech. They have denigrated and diluted due process. And they have hollowed and politicized the curriculum.

narrow exceptions—such as true threats, direct and immediate incitement to violence, defamation, and sexual harassment—the costs of regulating speech greatly exceed the benefits. One cost is that regulating speech disposes majorities to ban opinions that differ from their own.

Well-meaning people will say, “I hear you, I’m with you, I support free speech, too. But what does free speech offer to historically discriminated-against minorities and women?” The short answer is the same precious goods that it offers to everyone else: knowledge and truth. The long answer begins with three observations.

First, for many years women have formed the majority on campuses around the country. Approximately 56 percent of university students are female. On any given campus, women and historically discriminated-against minorities are together likely to represent a large majority. Thus, the curtailing of campus speech on behalf of these minorities and women reflects the will of a new campus majority. This new majority exhibits the same old antipathy to free speech. It plays the same old trick of repressing speech it labels offensive. And it succumbs to the same old tyrannical impulse to silence dissenting views that has always been a bane of democracy.

Second, as Erwin Chemerinsky and Howard Gillman argued last year in their book *Free Speech on Campus*, far from serving as an instrument of oppression and a tool of white male privilege, free speech has always been a weapon of those challenging the authorities—on the side of persecuted minorities, dissenters, iconoclasts, and reformers. In the United States, free speech has been essential to abolition, women’s suffrage, the civil rights movement, feminism, and gay rights. All took advantage of the room that free speech creates to criticize and correct the established order. Restricting speech—that is, censorship—has been from time immemorial a favorite weapon of authoritarians.

Third, a campus that upholds free speech and promotes its practice is by its very nature diverse and

inclusive. Such a campus offers marvelous benefits to everyone regardless of race, class, or gender. These benefits include the opportunity to express one’s thoughts with the best evidence and arguments at one’s disposal; the opportunity to listen to and learn from a variety of voices, some bound to complement and some sure to conflict with one’s own convictions; and, not least, the opportunity to live in a special sort of community, one dedicated to intellectual exploration and the pursuit of truth.

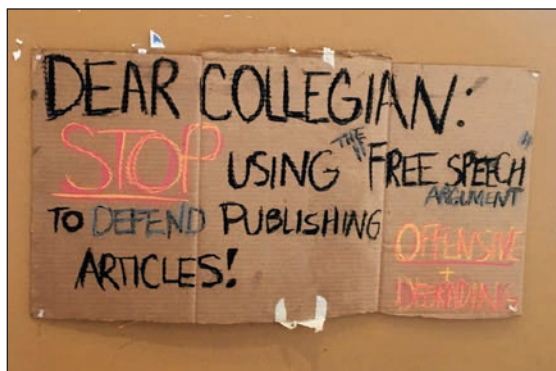
Instead of touting free speech’s benefits, however,

schools are encouraging students—especially but not only historically discriminated-against minorities and women—to see themselves as unfit for free speech, as weak and wounded, as fragile and vulnerable, as subjugated by invisible but pervasive social and political forces. Standing liberal education on its head, colleges and universities enlist students in cracking down on the lively exchange of opinion.

Liberal education ought to champion the virtues of freedom. It ought to cultivate curiosity and skepticism in inquiry, conscientiousness and boldness in argument, civility in speaking, attentiveness in listening, and coolness and clarity in responding to provocation. These virtues enable students—regardless of race, class, or gender—to take full advantage of free speech.

In *On Liberty* (1859), Mill provided a guide to the advantages deriving from the broadest possible protection of free speech. There are three possibilities, he observed. The first is that one’s opinion is false. In that event, we benefit from free speech because it provides access to true opinions.

A second possibility is that one’s opinion is true. But unless we are compelled to defend our true opinions, they grow stale. If they are untried and untested, if accepted on faith and affirmed reflexively by all around us, we lose sight of a true opinion’s foundations, implications, and limitations. If our opinion is true, we profit from free speech because the encounter with error invigorates our appreciation of our opinion’s roots and reach.



Above, a sign posted at Kenyon College decrying ‘offensive and degrading’ articles published in the student newspaper, the Collegian; below, the designation of a ‘free speech area’ on the campus of Texas Woman’s University



The third possibility is the common case. Typically, one's opinions are a mixture of true and false, as are the opinions of those with whom we differ. Free speech fosters the give and take that enables us to sift out what's false in our views and discover what's true in others' views.

Since free speech is essential to liberal education, we must devise reforms that will enable colleges and universities to reinvigorate it on their campuses. Last year, the Phoenix-based Goldwater Institute developed "model state-level legislation designed to safeguard freedom of speech at America's public university systems." Consistent with its recommendations, universities could take several salutary steps:

- Abolish speech codes and all other forms of censorship.
- Publish a formal statement setting forth the purposes of free speech.
- Create freshman orientation programs on free speech.
- Punish those who attempt to disrupt free speech.
- Host an annual lecture on the theory and practice of free speech.
- Issue an annual report on the state of free speech on campus.
- Strive where possible for institutional neutrality on partisan controversies, the better to serve as an arena for vigorous debate of the enduring controversies.

Many colleges and universities won't act on such principles. Public universities, however, are subject to the First Amendment, and state representatives can enact legislation to assist state schools in complying with their constitutional obligations.

Private universities are not subject to the First Amendment. But like public universities, they have a surpassing educational interest in safeguarding free speech. To help private universities discharge their educational responsibilities, states could follow California's example. Through the 1992 Leonard Law, California prohibits private colleges and universities from restricting constitutionally protected speech. Congress, further, can tie federal funding to schools' willingness to protect free speech.

DUE PROCESS DENIGRATED

The curtailing of free speech on campus has not occurred in a vacuum. It is closely connected to the denial of due process in disciplinary proceedings dealing with allegations of sexual misconduct. Both suppose that little is to be gained from listening to the other side. Both rest on the conceit of infallibility.

Campus practices, for example, can presume guilt by designating accusers as "victims" and those accused as "perpetrators." Universities sometimes deprive the accused of full knowledge of the charges and evidence and

of access to counsel. It is typical for them to use the lowest standard of proof—a preponderance of the evidence—despite the gravity of allegations. In many instances, universities withhold exculpatory evidence and prevent the accused from presenting what exculpatory evidence is available; they deny the accused the right to cross-examine witnesses, even indirectly; and they allow unsuccessful complainants to appeal, effectively exposing the accused to double jeopardy. To achieve their preferred outcomes in disciplinary hearings and grievance procedures, universities have even been known to flout their own published rules and regulations.

There is, of course, no room for sexual harassment on campus or anywhere else. Predators must be stopped. Sexual assault is a heinous crime. Allegations should be fully investigated. Universities should provide complainants immediate medical care and where appropriate psychological counseling and educational accommodations. Students found guilty should be punished to the full extent of the law.

At the same time, schools must honor due process, which rightly embodies the recognition that accusations and defenses are put forward by fallible human beings and implementing justice is always the work of fallible human beings. Some would nevertheless truncate due process on the grounds that a rape epidemic plagues higher education, but, fortunately, there is no such thing. The common claim that women who attend four-year colleges face a one in five chance of being sexually assaulted has been debunked. According to the most recent Department of Justice data, 6.1 in every 1,000 female students will be raped or sexually assaulted; the rate for non-student females in the same age group is 7.6 per 1,000. Yes, even one incident of sexual assault is too many. Yes, women's safety must be a priority. And yes, we can do more. But contrary to conventional campus wisdom, university women confront a lower incidence of sexual assault than do women outside of higher education.

Others would curb due process because all women should just be believed. Certainly they should be *heard*. But no one should just be believed, especially when another's rights are at stake. And for a simple reason: Human beings are fallible. As Harvard professor of psychology Daniel Schacter amply demonstrated in *The Seven Sins of Memory: How the Mind Forgets and Remembers* (2001), we humans routinely forget, routinely remember things that never were, and routinely reconstruct the past in ways that serve our passions and interests.

Then there's the question of why universities are involved at all in adjudicating allegations of nonconsensual sex. *Nonconsensual sex* is a common statutory definition of rape. Generally, universities leave violent crimes to the police and courts. If a student were accused of murdering a

fellow student, who would dream of convening a committee of administrators, professors, and students to investigate, prosecute, judge, and punish? For that matter, if a student were accused of stealing or vandalizing a fellow student's car, would we turn to a university committee for justice? If both murder, the gravest crime, and crimes much less grave than sexual assault—thrift and vandalism—are matters for the criminal justice system, why isn't the violent crime of sexual assault?

After all, administrators, faculty, and students generally lack training in collecting and analyzing evidence, questioning witnesses, and conducting hearings. Why then suppose that they ought to investigate, prosecute, judge, and punish alleged criminal conduct that carries sentences of many years in jail?

Partly because the government said so. In an April 2011 "Dear Colleague" letter, the Department of Education reconceived universities' Title IX obligations. Title IX prohibits institutions of higher education that receive federal funding from discriminating on the basis of sex. That's good. But the Department of Education equated due process for men with discrimination against women. That's bad. And it threatened universities with costly federal investigations and the loss of federal funding if they did not drastically reduce due process for those accused of sexual misconduct. That's very bad.

When the Obama administration sent that letter, it was pushing on an open door. Administrators, professors, and students have internalized doctrines developed more than 30 years ago by the law professor Catharine MacKinnon. In *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State* (1989), she argued that in a "male supremacist" society like ours, women may not be able to distinguish sex from sexual assault. In MacKinnon's world, women are unable to give meaningful consent. Last December, Jessica Bennett, the *New York Times's* "gender editor," restated MacKinnon's extraordinary claim. Bennett suggested in an essay that "cultural expectations" render some women "unable to consent." That is, cultural expectations force women who are not subject to the slightest physical coercion to consent to sex contrary to their wills.

Emergency conditions justify emergency measures. The theory that women are a systematically subjugated class—subject to "structural misogyny," as MacKinnon put it in a February op-ed in the *New York Times*—motivates the suspension of due process for men. It impels universities to impose on men the responsibility to obtain explicit and unambiguous consent at every step of sexual relations. Under this theory, though, even affirmative consent is not decisive. For campus authorities may always interpret a

"yes" as wrongfully extracted by the oppressor's "emotional coercion" or "emotional manipulation" of the oppressed.

The denial of female agency, which follows from the claim that women are incapable of truly consenting to sex, implies that a man who acknowledges having had sex with a woman has *prima facie* committed assault. This approach—common on campuses—may be illegal. Insofar as it presumes male guilt and denies men due process, it appears to violate Title IX by discriminating against men on the basis of sex. It is also profoundly illiberal and anti-woman. It turns out that the denial of due process for men rests on the rejection of the belief—central to liberal democracy—that



Overstated by a factor of 30: Protesters in Denver repeat now-disproven assault claims, May 2002.

women, as human beings, are free and equal, able to decide for themselves, and responsible for their actions.

The willingness of university officials to deny female agency, presume male guilt, and dispense with due process is on display in the more than 150 lawsuits filed since 2011 in state and federal courts challenging universities' handlings of sexual-assault accusations. Lawsuits arising from allegations of deprivation of due process at Amherst, Berkeley, Colgate, Oberlin, Swarthmore, USC, Yale, and many more make chilling reading. Numerous plaintiff victories have already been recorded.

Serious as is the problem of sexual misconduct, there is no legitimate justification for abandoning due process, the cornerstone of legal justice in liberal democracies, in campus cases involving sex. The denial of due process, moreover, causes harms that go far beyond the life-altering injuries suffered by wrongly convicted students. It also undermines liberal education. By jettisoning the distilled wisdom about fundamental fairness in a free society, higher education accustoms students to the exercise of arbitrary power. It

habituates them to regard established authority as infallible. And it encourages them to see more than half of the student population as unfit for the challenges of freedom.

What should be done? Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos took an important step last year by rescinding the 2011 “Dear Colleague” letter. The federal government no longer *mandates* the *denial* of due process in campus cases concerning sexual misconduct. But the government doesn’t *require* due process on campus either.

To take advantage of their newfound freedom to provide due process for all their students, universities might consult the October 2014 statement published by 28 Harvard Law School professors in the *Boston Globe*. The statement offers guidance in reconciling the struggle against sexual misconduct with the imperatives of due process. It counsels universities to adopt several measures:

- Inform accused students in a timely fashion of the precise charges against them and of the facts alleged.
- Ensure that accused students have adequate representation.
- Adopt a standard of proof and other procedural protections commensurate with the gravity of the charge, which should include the right to cross-examine witnesses, even if indirectly, and the opportunity to present a full defense at an adversarial hearing.
- Avoid assigning any one office—particularly the Title IX office, which is an interested party because maximizing convictions justifies its presence—responsibility for fact-finding, prosecuting, adjudicating, and appeals.

In, addition, universities ought to make sessions on due process an essential part of freshman orientation.

It is unreasonable, however, to expect the restoration of due process on campuses anytime soon. For starters, it depends on reinvigoration of free speech. A culture of free speech presupposes and promotes a healthy sense of fallibility. That opens one to the justice of due process. For what is due process but formalization of the effort by fallible human beings to fairly evaluate other fallible human beings’ conflicting claims?

Free speech, however, is not enough on its own to rehabilitate due process. Commitment to both is rooted in an understanding of their indispensable role in vindicating liberal democracy’s promise of freedom and equality. To recover that understanding, it is necessary to renovate the curriculum so that liberal education prepares students for freedom.

THE CURRICULUM POLITICIZED

The college curriculum has been hollowed out and politicized. The conceit of infallibility is again at work—in the conviction that the past is either a well-known and reprehensible repository of cruel ideas

and oppressive practices or not worth knowing because progress has refuted or otherwise rendered irrelevant the foolish old ways of comprehending the world and organizing human affairs.

The disdain for the serious study of the history of literature, philosophy, religion, politics, and war that our colleges and universities implicitly teach by neglecting them, denigrating them, or omitting them entirely from the curriculum, has devastating consequences for liberal education. Without a solid foundation of historical knowledge, students cannot understand the ideas and events that have shaped our culture, the practices and institutions that undergird liberal democracy in America, the advantages and weaknesses of constitutional self-government, and the social and political alternatives to regimes based on freedom and equality. Absent such an understanding, students’ reasoning lacks suppleness, perspective, and depth. Consequently, graduates of America’s colleges and universities, many of whom will go on to occupy positions of leadership in their communities and in the nation, are poorly equipped to form reasoned judgments about the complex challenges America faces and the purposes to which they might wish to devote their lives.

To say that the curriculum has been hollowed is not to say that it fails to deliver a message but that it lacks a core. Much of college education is a mishmash of unconnected courses. Most undergraduates are required to fulfill some form of distribution requirements. Typically, this involves a few classes in the humanities, a few in the social sciences, and a few in the natural sciences. Within those broad parameters, students generally pick and choose as they like. For fulfilling requirements in the humanities, schools tend to treat courses on the sociology of sports, American film and race, and queer literary theory as just as good as classical history, Shakespeare, or American political thought.

The most common objection to a coherent and substantive core curriculum is that it would impair students’ freedom. Each undergraduate is different, the argument goes, and each knows best the topics and courses that will advance his or her educational goals. What right do professors and administrators have to tell students what they must study?

The better question is why we put up with professors and administrators who lack the confidence and competence to fashion and implement a core curriculum that provides a solid foundation for a lifetime of learning. Every discipline recognizes that one must learn to walk before one learns to run. The star basketball player had to learn the fundamentals of dribbling, passing, and shooting to excel as a point guard, power forward, or center. The virtuoso jazz musician had to practice scales before performing

masterpieces. The outstanding lawyer had to grasp the basics of contracts, torts, criminal justice, and civil procedure before effectively structuring complex transactions or ably defending a client's interests in a court of law.

In every discipline, excellence depends on the acquisition of primary knowledge and necessary skills. Even the ability to improvise effectively—with a game-winning shot, a searing riff, or a devastating cross-examination—is acquired initially through submission to widely shared standards and training in established practices. It is peculiar, to put it mildly, that the authorities on college campuses are in the habit of insisting on their lack of qualifications to specify for novices the proper path to excellence.

But faculty and administrators only half mean what they say when they oppose a core curriculum on the grounds that it infringes on students' freedom. Professors tend to adhere to a rigid view of what counts as legitimate knowledge and high-level accomplishment in their chosen fields of expertise. Scholars of critical race theory no less than analytic philosophers impose on students a fixed course of reading and seek to direct their thinking within rigorously constructed channels. Professors across fields and departments understand that designing a core curriculum is unfeasible because they know that there is no shared understanding spanning the contemporary university concerning the general outlines of what an educated person should know.

For many professors, ideological opposition to a core curriculum on the grounds that it interferes with students' freedom merges with self-interested opposition to it on the grounds that having to teach a common and required course of study would interfere with faculty members' freedom. University hiring, promotion, and tenure decisions usually turn on scholarly achievement in rarefied areas of research. Powerful professional interests impel faculty to avoid teaching the sort of courses that provide students with general introductions, solid foundations, and broad overviews because those take time away from the specialized scholarly labors that confer prestige and status. Much better for professors, given the incentives for professional advancement entrenched by university administrations, to offer courses that focus on small aspects of arcane issues.

Learning to run before they learn to walk, students squander their college years advancing their professors' interests in examining fine points of, say, textile production in Guatemala or the impact of the 1950s fashion

industry on attitudes about gender and graduate with little appreciation of the operation of free markets and command economies, the lineaments of constitutional government and authoritarian government, and the central teachings of the varieties of biblical faith and the basic doctrines of the other great religions of the world. The absence of a core curriculum, thus, deprives students of the chance to comprehend their civilization and compare it constructively with others. It also leaves them bereft of a common fund of knowledge with which to converse with classmates and formulate their disagreements as well as their agreements.

The hollowed-out curriculum, moreover, is politicized as much by routine exclusion of conservative perspectives as by aggressive promulgation of progressive doctrines. Students who express conservative opinions—about romance, sex, and the family; abortion and affirmative action; and individual liberty, limited government, and capitalism—often encounter mockery, incredulity, or hostile silence. Few professors who teach moral and political philosophy recognize the obligation to ensure in their classroom the full and energetic representation of the conservative sides of questions. Courses featuring Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Karl Marx, and John Rawls abound; those

featuring Adam Smith, Edmund Burke, and Friedrich Hayek are scant.

Worse still, higher education fails to teach the truly liberal principles that explain why study of *both* conservative and progressive ideas nourishes the virtues of toleration and civility so vital to liberal democracy. Many faculty in the humanities and social sciences suppose they are champions of pluralism even as they inculcate progressive ideas. The cause of their delusion is that the rightward extreme of their intellectual universe extends no further than the center-left. Many were themselves so thoroughly cheated of a liberal education that, unaware of their loss, they blithely perpetuate the crime against education by cheating their students.

Small wonder that our politics is polarized. Both through their content and their omissions, college curricula teach students on the left that their outlook is self-evidently correct and that the purpose of intellectual inquiry is to determine how best to implement progressive ideas. At the same time, students on the right hear loud and clear

For many professors, ideological opposition to a core curriculum on the grounds that it interferes with students' freedom merges with personal opposition to it on the grounds that having to teach a common and required course of study would interfere with *their* freedom.

that their opinions are ugly expressions of ignorance and bigotry and do not deserve serious consideration in pressing public-policy debates. By fostering smugness on the left and resentment on the right, our colleges and universities make a major contribution to polarizing young voters and future public officials.

What should be done?

First, freshman orientation must be restructured. Schools should not dwell on diversity, equality, and inclusion while excluding diversity of thought. In addition to providing sessions on the fundamentals of free speech and the essentials of due process, they ought to give pride of place in orientation to explaining the proper purposes of liberal education. This means, among other things, reining in the routine exhortations to students to change the world—as if there were no controversial issues wrapped up in determining which changes would be for the better and which for the worse. Instead, orientation programming should concentrate on helping students understand the distinctive role higher education plays in preserving civilization's precious inheritance and the distinctive role such preservation plays in enriching students' capacity for living free and worthy lives.

Second, curricula must be restructured to make room for a core. In our day and age, undergraduate specialization in the form of a major is inevitable. And students accustomed to a wealth of choice and to personalizing their music lists and news sources cannot be expected to abide a curriculum that does not provide a generous offering of electives. But even if a third of college were devoted to a major and a third to pure electives, that would leave a third—more than a year's worth of study—to core knowledge.

A proper curriculum should not only introduce students to the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. It should also make mandatory a course on the tradition of freedom that underlies the American constitutional order and clarifies the benefits of a liberal education. In addition, the curriculum should require study of the great moral, political, and religious questions, and the seminal and conflicting answers, that define Western civilization. And it should require study of the seminal and conflicting answers to those great questions about our humanity and our place in the world given by non-Western civilizations.

Third, professors must bring the spirit of liberal education to their classrooms. The most carefully crafted and farsighted revisions of the curriculum will not succeed in revivifying liberal education unless professors teach in the spirit of Mill's dictum from *On Liberty*, "He who knows only his own side of the case, knows little of that." Indeed, unless professors recognize the wisdom of Mill's dictum,

they will fail to grasp the defects of the contemporary curriculum that make its revision urgent.

THE PROFESSOR'S VOCATION

To provide a properly liberal education, then, our colleges and universities must undertake three substantial reforms. They must institutionalize the unfettered exchange of ideas. They must govern campus life on the premise that students are endowed with equal rights and therefore equally deserving of due process without regard to race, class, or gender. And they must renovate the curriculum by introducing all students to the principles of freedom; to the continuities, cleavages, and controversies that constitute America and the West; and to the continuities, cleavages, and controversies that constitute at least one other civilization.

To accomplish these reforms, the conceit of infallibility must be tamed. Progress in one area of reform depends on progress in all. But to recall a matter Marx touched on and, long before him, Plato pursued: Who will educate the educators?

Thirty-five years ago, a brilliant young Harvard Law School professor named Roberto Unger published a remarkable essay in the school's law review. A manifesto of sorts, "The Critical Legal Studies Movement" called for a radical remaking of the American legal and political order. Unger ruefully described the academy that he had recently entered. He likened his fellow professors to priests who had lost their faith but kept their jobs.

Times have changed. The academy has undergone a kind of religious awakening. These days many professors resemble priests who believe their job is to impose their faith. But the zealous priest is no more suited to the vocation of liberal education than is the cynical priest. Professors would do better to take the midwife—in the Socratic spirit that Mill embraced—as their model.

Liberal education's task is to liberate students from ignorance and emancipate them from dogma so that they can live examined lives. It does this by furnishing and refining minds—transmitting knowledge and equipping students to think for themselves.

What about political responsibility? What about justice? What about saving the country and the world?

Through the discipline of liberal education, professors do what is in their limited power to cultivate citizens capable of self-government. And law professors do what is in their limited power to cultivate thoughtful lawyers. Those are lofty contributions since self-government and the rule of law are essential features of liberal democracy—the regime most compatible with our freedom, our equality, and our natural desire to understand the world and live rightly and well in it. ♦

The Hills Are Alive

Twenty-four years after a horrific genocide, Rwanda has made an astonishing recovery

By DAVID DeVoss

Kigali, Rwanda

We rose before dawn and began driving across Rwanda, a densely populated East African country on the edge of the Great Rift Valley from which spring the headwaters of the Nile. As the sun rose above the misty hills, the roadsides filled with brightly dressed women balancing bundles atop their heads and men pushing bicycles piled high with agricultural produce. A mountainous, landlocked nation that calls itself “the Land of 1,000 Hills,” Rwanda has 12 million people who live in a country smaller than Maryland.

Our destination was the Akagera National Park, an undulating slice of savanna along the Tanzanian border that contains a protected wildlife park. The park originally covered 965 square miles, but in 1997 it was reduced in size by two-thirds to provide cropland for homeless refugees.

I had come to see herds of elephants and giraffes nibbling acacia branches, but after several hours driving around the park the most prevalent mammals seemed to be warthogs, zebras, and long-horned cattle.

“Where are all the lions and leopards?” I asked park ranger Daniel Nishimwe. “Eaten,” he explained, “by starving survivors of the 1994 genocide.”

“We started repopulating the park several years ago,” he quickly added, “and now have 22 lions, 11 species of antelope, and some black rhinos in addition to giraffes, elephants, hippos, buffalo, and leopards. It just takes a while for them to get comfortable and reproduce.”

If Americans have difficulty remembering what happened in Rwanda in 1994, it’s probably because they were preoccupied at the time with O.J. Simpson, the Tonya Harding scandal, and the suicide of Kurt Cobain. The few newspapers with correspondents in Africa tended to mischaracterize the massacre as a continuation of a four-year

civil war pitting Hutu farmers, who controlled the country, against Tutsi herdsmen, under attack for the past 30 years. Just another tribal war, folks. Nothing to see here.

Violence began on April 6 that year when the plane carrying President Juvénal Habyarimana, a Hutu, was shot down on its approach to Kigali airport. By the next day Hutu extremists had seized control of the government and directed mobs armed with clubs and machetes to set up



A path to mass graves at the Kigali Genocide Memorial

roadblocks and begin killing Tutsis—and any person moderate enough to support them. Tutsis were easy to identify since every Rwandan was required to carry a national identity card stamped with his or her ethnicity.

Among the first to fall were 10 U.N. Blue Berets from Belgium. The slaughter was so savage that Rwanda’s former colonial master immediately withdrew from further U.N. peacekeeping efforts. U.N. Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali then asked Washington to intercede. But the Clinton administration, still reeling from the 1993 “Black-hawk down” fiasco in Somalia, wanted nothing more to do with an intervention in Africa.

Hutu machete attacks often resulted in prolonged agony. Mutilations were common, as was sexual violence against women. Babies were smashed against rocks or thrown alive into pit latrines. By the middle of May garbage trucks in Kigali had collected 60,000 bodies and buried them in mass graves.

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“Brutality here does not end with murder,” reported the *Economist*. “At massacre sites, corpses, many of them children, have been methodically dismembered and the body parts stacked neatly in separate piles.”

By June bodies were piling up at the rate of 10,000 a day, but for French president François Mitterrand the real concern was that the French-speaking Hutu might lose Rwanda to the English-speaking Tutsi army marching south. Not since defeats in Indochina and Algeria had Paris lost a member of la Francophonie, the international union of French-speaking countries. To prevent that outcome he ordered 80 tons of weaponry flown to Kigali. The shipment included thousands of fragmentation grenades intended for use against the “Khmer Noir.” Hutu *génocidaires* instead threw them into crowds of Tutsi refugees.

When the violence finally abated 100 days later, almost 1.1 million people lay dead. Seventy-five percent of the Tutsi population inside the country had been killed, as well as the vast majority of moderate political and civic voices.

I came to Rwanda with a production company filming *Rwanda: The Royal Tour*, a travel documentary that will air on PBS on April 26. The *Royal Tour* series was created by Peter Greenberg, the CBS travel editor who convinces heads of state like Jordan’s King Abdullah and leaders like Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu to spend a week showing him around their countries while the cameras are rolling. Greenberg has produced seven *Royal Tours*, but timing a tourism documentary to coincide with the 24th anniversary of Africa’s most horrific genocide seemed unusual.

“When I told people I was going to Rwanda they told me to be careful and stay safe, but their concern is based on circumstances that no longer exist,” says Greenberg. “The Gallup Global Law and Order report rates Rwanda as the second-safest country (after Algeria) in Africa. The World Bank ranks it No. 1 when it comes to the ease of doing business. As for cleanliness, there’s no dispute that Kigali is the cleanest city in Africa. Rwanda really has a lot to offer.”

The astonishing turnaround from genocide to safety and growth is mostly owed to Paul Kagame, a bespectacled 60-year-old former guerrilla leader who grew up in a Ugandan refugee camp after his Tutsi parents were forced to flee Kigali in 1960 in advance of a Hutu mob. Despite his

Rwandan nationality, Kagame first fought in Uganda and may be the only military commander to have received training both in Castro’s Cuba and at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

Kagame’s military career was strikingly successful: At age 22 he fought with the forces that toppled Ugandan dictator Idi Amin. Almost two decades later he ended Rwanda’s genocide leading an army largely composed of Tutsi refugees. In 1996, following repeated border incursions by Hutu *génocidaires* based in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kagame, then 39, sent Rwanda’s tiny army into a country more than three times the size of Texas and toppled dictator Mobutu Sese Seko.

Over the 24 years Kagame’s Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) party has been in power, the economy has grown between 7 and 8 percent a year. Per capita income of \$150 at the end of the genocide now stands at \$700 and is expected to climb to \$1,100 by 2020. Rwanda remains the world’s 20th-poorest country, but life expectancy is up and infant mortality is down. Health improvements stem from the fact that 91 percent of the population has medical insurance and everyone in Rwanda’s 15,000 villages receives free eye care. Medications and

blood-test results are delivered directly to individual homes in remote locations by drones operated by a Silicon Valley company called Zipline. Flying from two distribution centers, the fixed-wing drones can carry up to four pounds of cargo and have a round-trip range of 99 miles.

Foreign aid donors provide almost all of Rwanda’s health budget, as they do in many other African nations. But in Rwanda the money actually gets spent on its intended purpose.

A commitment to the environment is evident the moment one debarks at the airport in Kigali; plastic bags carried by incoming passengers are summarily shredded. Outside the terminal, the streets leading into town are free of litter, graffiti, homeless encampments, and prostitutes. Traffic flows in an orderly fashion, and there are no vendors coming up to cars at stoplights.



Most African countries have presentable capitals with some nice neighborhoods and clean streets. What distinguishes Kagame's administration is the effort to bring government benefits to rural areas as well. He has used aid money not only to improve highways but also to build a fiber-optic network, which provides remote districts with cell phone reception and Internet connectivity. Recently, a San Francisco company called Off Grid Electric began installing solar panels atop homes, allowing families to charge their phones, have lighting at night, and avoid the expense of buying kerosene.

Special efforts are made to keep rural communities cohesive. The *Girinka* program, initiated in 2006, gives dairy cows to poor families to improve nutrition. The family repays the government by giving their cow's first calf to a needy neighbor.

Rich and poor alike are expected to work the last Saturday of every month with their neighbors to clean and improve their surroundings. Known as *umuganda*, these national days of community service often are spent building schools. As a result, 90 percent of Rwanda's youth now attend school where many receive a laptop computer to share with other students.

"Paul Kagame has made amazing progress despite having inherited one of the most tragic situations in the developing world," says former Haitian prime minister Laurent Lamothe, 45, who now heads the Miami-based Global Voice Group, which provides technological telecommunication solutions to developing countries. "He's a dedicated conservationist working to make Rwanda into a premier tourist destination. I understand why the people of Rwanda have elected him three times."

The popularity of the RPF is undeniable. But its electoral success is spectacular enough to send mixed signals. When Kagame ran for president in 2003 and 2010 he was elected with 95 and 93 percent of the vote, respectively. Had he retired from politics in 2017 and accepted a U.N. sinecure, he would be revered as the George Washington of Rwanda. But in 2015 the RPF proposed a constitutional amendment to abolish the two-term limit for presidents. And last August Paul Kagame was reelected for a third term with 98 percent of the vote. Theoretically, he could tack on two more five-year terms when he comes up for reelection in 2024, extending his rule to 2034.

Kagame's long goodbye does not seem to have damaged him domestically, but NGOs and academics believe he and his party risk going down the dark path earlier trod

by Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe and South Africa's African National Congress. Rwanda's "development miracle" now often is described as "impressive but repressive."

"He's been in power since 1994," notes Ruth Iyob, an Africa specialist at the University of Missouri, St. Louis Center for International Studies. "Is 24 years going to turn into 40? Rwanda is clean and runs well, but so did Mussolini's Italy."

Kagame insists his role models are Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore and Malaysia's Mahathir Mohamad. Human rights



Above, Rwanda's president Paul Kagame, left, with documentary producer Peter Greenberg; below, an evening market in Kigali



organizations like Amnesty International, Reporters Without Borders, Freedom House, and Human Rights Watch, however, believe his successes are tarnished by press intimidation and the exile or imprisonment of political opponents.

Rwanda's president is a complicated politician who governs in a challenging corner of the world. Is he autocratic or merely authoritarian? After ending the genocide he abolished the death penalty, released thousands of prisoners to participate in the country's reconciliation process, took a strong stand against homophobia, encouraged women

to run for government office, and removed all ethnic and social references from identification cards. His “One Rwanda” policy is strictly enforced to the point of penalizing those who openly advocate divisiveness.

According to the “Global Competitiveness Report,” Rwanda is the best place in Africa to be a woman. Women occupy 64 percent of the seats in parliament, hold 42 percent of the cabinet posts, and fill 40 percent of the judge-ships on the Rwandan supreme court.

These reforms don’t feel like the acts of a traditional African strongman.



Children run to welcome an unexpected visit from the president.

On the third day of *The Royal Tour* filming, action shifted to the mountains surrounding Lake Kivu in the western part of the country. Greenberg and the president were scheduled to ride bicycles down a hill while wiry competition cyclists belonging to Bike Rwanda zoomed up. The scene would give Kagame the opportunity to dramatize for viewers why Rwanda is known as the Land of 1,000 Hills. In the afternoon they would take jet skis out on Lake Kivu.

That morning I asked Kagame about international criticism of his administration. I approached Rwanda’s president while a PBS technician was attaching a camera to the handlebar of his bike and after exchanging pleasantries brought up criticisms that Rwanda’s democracy falls short of Western standards. “Westerners consider their democratic model as the only viable one,” he told me, somehow managing to look professorial even in a bike helmet. “An inflexible model can easily become an alien imposition. Our country is not America. We are different. Yes, we share common values, but we have to make a democracy that takes our culture and values into account.”

Rwandans believe most of the pain they’ve experienced over the past century, culminating in the genocide, directly results from Western values. European explorers stumbled into the country searching for the source of the Nile, a quest that prompted numerous expeditions in the 19th century. A succession of colonial overlords, first Germans, then Belgians, played off the country’s three main groups—the Twa, a pygmoid group of hunter-gathers, the Hutu, and the Tutsi—against each other.

At the end of World War II, a new generation of Belgian administrators began putting Hutus in charge. Giving power to the largest ethnic group seemed logical in a period of decolonization, but when Belgium finally left the country in 1962, chaos ensued.

“Colonialism came in, favored one group, then favored another, and then left,” says University of Southern California professor Amy Marczewski Carnes, program manager for USC’s Shoah Foundation. “Decolonization laid the groundwork for the genocide.”

Three takes are necessary before the director is satisfied with the morning’s work. The Bike Rwanda group is exhausted, and the film crew is ready for lunch. As a production assistant unhooks Kagame’s wireless microphone, he motions me over for more conversation.

He’s concerned that I not misinterpret his earlier remarks. He admires America so much that all of his children attend U.S. colleges. What he does not like, he says, are the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*.

“The cynicism of your media makes them believe that if things are smooth and stable in Africa there must be something hidden and wrong. Rwanda is clean and safe with an economy growing more than 7 percent a year, but they write about soldiers on the streets of Kigali.

“There are more than 150,000 heavily armed guerrillas living in refugee camps just across the Congo border that want to destroy this government. Our soldiers are meant to reassure Rwandans that never again will they be attacked. They are also a visible warning to those who would do us harm that there is a line that can’t be crossed.”

The next destination is Lake Kivu, a pristine body of water that straddles Rwanda’s border with the Congo. The only road there leads through a small town whose residents pour into the street as the presidential SUV approaches. It’s an unscripted moment, and some of the cameramen are missing.

When President Kagame exits the car, adults going home for lunch and excited children heading home from school surge toward him, singing a song from his 2017

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reelection campaign, “There’s No Fight.” It tells the story of the RPF’s desperate 1990 escape from government forces intent on its destruction. Short of food and winter clothing, Tutsi rebels raised in Ugandan refugee camps found refuge alongside the bands of gorillas American primatologist Dian Fossey had died trying to protect five years before.

*Just as God protected Kagame in the mountains,
Now that same God protects us all.*

The following day, the PBS crew heads to those same mountains, where the president will escort Greenberg high into Volcanoes National Park to meet some of Rwanda’s most iconic residents: gorillas, still Rwanda’s most valuable attraction. En route to the jungle, Kagame wants to talk more about America.

“When I go to the U.S. I like to visit New York, Chicago, and L.A., not Washington, D.C.,” he smiles. “I hate going to the State Department because it’s just politics with them and you end up doing nothing.”

Kagame’s goal on business trips is to meet American businesspeople who will invest in Rwanda. “Instead of relying on USAID, I’d rather look for a private company that will come here and create good jobs,” he says. “That’s what builds a country. I’d rather host a Chamber of Commerce tour than a delegation of state governors.”

Rwanda underscored its determination to join the international business community in 2008 by withdrawing from la Francophonie and making English the official language in secondary education. The following year it joined the British Commonwealth of Nations.

Not all Americans starting new enterprises in Rwanda are businesspeople. Crystal Rugege is a computer scientist who spent seven years in Silicon Valley working for IBM before moving to Rwanda six years ago to create a Kigali campus for Carnegie Mellon University. Already 100 students have graduated with degrees in electrical engineering, computer science, and information technology. Next year she will open a larger campus with an innovation incubator that will accommodate 300 students.

Born in Champaign, Ill., to parents from Rwanda and Uganda, Rugege has found a home in Rwanda. “The country,” she says, “offers a results-oriented, business-friendly environment and has serious students dedicated to developing the East African region.”

The Rwandan government hopes Kigali will become the center of Silicon 1,000 Hills, but until that happens tourism remains the largest industry, generating \$400 million a year, 5 percent of total GDP. The United States already accounts for a third of the country’s visitors, and the number should grow when RwandaAir starts flying to New York in August.

Rwanda already has spent more than \$310 million to improve tourism infrastructure. Private developers are

pledging \$144 million to construct new hotels. Most will be built in the capital, but the more luxurious properties will accommodate travelers who come to see mountain gorillas. Last year, more than 22,000 foreign visitors paid \$16.8 million for the \$750 permits allowing them to take an arduous hike through a rainforest to watch the gorillas from afar. The revenue stream will increase this year, since the price of the gorilla-watching permits was recently doubled to \$1,500.

“Rwanda’s tourist attractions will adopt the Tahiti pricing model instead of the mass marketing strategy found in Hawaii,” explains Rwanda tourism marketing manager



Mountain gorillas: still the top tourist attraction

Linda Mutesi. “We believe a premium product merits a premium price.”

When Paul Kagame began designing a new constitution for Rwanda, most Western governments, including that of the United States, advised him to create a system of quotas in which government jobs, college scholarships, bank loans, and so forth would be apportioned between Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa based on their share of the total population. Kagame refused. Segmenting Rwandan society along ethnic lines was the primary cause of the genocide, he believed. There would be no more ethnic set-asides. The new Rwanda would be One Rwanda.

In today’s America, the idea of a melting pot has become a microaggression. Since so many Americans no longer believe in our national motto, perhaps we should give it to Rwanda. *E pluribus unum* certainly describes the One Rwanda policy. ♦

In *Black Mirror*'s third-season episode 'Playtest,' Katie (Wunmi Mosaku) prepares Cooper (Wyatt Russell) to test a video game via a direct brain interface.



A 'Mirror' to Our Souls

The darkest show on TV—Netflix's tech-dystopian Black Mirror—still leaves hope for a human future. **BY MICHAEL SALER**

Cautious: Netflix's *Black Mirror* may be hazardous to your health. This anthology series about the perils of modern technologies is one of the most captivating shows on television; with its talented casts, immersive worlds, and tricky narratives, it approaches platinum heights in this new golden age of television. But be prepared to binge and cringe simultaneously, because it is also the darkest series being broadcast today. While laden with satirical humor, the often-harrowing episodes can

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leave an unsettling residue of anxiety.

The series premiered in Britain in 2011 with an episode, "The National Anthem," that set the tone. An opinion-conscious prime minister is thrown into crisis when a popular member of the royal family (think Princess Diana) is kidnapped. Her terrified pleas for help are broadcast across the nation, together with the kidnapper's condition for her release: The prime minister must have sexual intercourse with a pig on live television. The public ultimately supports this demand through their comments and "likes" online, driven as much by an unstated desire to witness the humiliating spectacle as by any concern for the princess. And it gets its wish. As the prime minister's pained and sweaty

exertions are broadcast, we see the viewers' facial expressions change from amused disbelief to shock, disgust, and ultimately chagrin at their complicity in the dehumanizing spectacle. Those new to the series may experience a similar spectrum of emotions. "The National Anthem" may be the first episode, but it isn't necessarily the best place to begin watching *Black Mirror*. Since it doesn't matter in what order the shows are seen, the 2014 holiday special "White Christmas" or the third season's "San Junipero" would each make a kinder—and more representative—starting point.

Black Mirror, which now runs to four seasons and 19 episodes, is unrelenting in its depiction of connectivity as a conduit for cruelty. A condemned

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murderer is repeatedly tortured in a privatized prison that doubles as a public attraction. A doctor with a malfunctioning brain implant meant to heighten his empathy to patients' discomfort becomes so addicted to pain that he ecstatically slices off portions of his own body. A woman is hounded relentlessly by a robotic guard dog equipped with fiendish devices designed to crush, kill, and destroy. One could be forgiven for wanting to take a bath after watching *Black Mirror*—at least until the fourth-season episode “Crocodile,” in which a man is bludgeoned to death in the tub.

How is such a mordant series mesmerizing? The episodes share three underlying traits. First, they are, according to the show's creator Charlie Brooker, “about the way we live now—and about the way we might be living in 10 minutes' time if we're clumsy.” He calls *Black Mirror* a “mini-film festival” of different genres, including police procedurals, space operas, coming-of-age stories, and so on. Brooker was influenced by *The Twilight Zone*, which used fantasy to comment allegorically on contemporary social and political issues. He has also taken to heart that show's twist endings, many of which were dark: “*The Twilight Zone* was sometimes shockingly cruel,” he noted in 2011, “far crueler than most TV drama today would dare to be.”

Black Mirror has crashed right through that dystopian glass ceiling. The show reflects our contemporary fears of information technology, its second salient feature. Brooker modestly insists that the episodes are little more than “campfire stories.” “I try to focus on us being entertaining,” he said in 2016. “I don't have any answers.” But his pessimism taps into a very popular vein of worry. Born in 1971 to a Quaker family and raised in a quiet village, Brooker had what sounds like a bucolic childhood. Yet his maternal grandparents were active campaigners against nuclear weapons, and he recalls being terrified by documentaries on atomic war. He found solace for his anxieties, he says, in “nihilistic horror films.” And he eagerly plumbed the dawning age of video games in the 1980s, which provided him with fantasy environments

he could master: “I was fascinated just by the notion that this TV had a stick attached and you could control what happened on the screen. It was love at first sight.” The real world, of course, is less tractable, and he readily admits to worrying about everything. “Pointing out the madness of things is reassuring to people because other people feel the same. ... It's good to know other people are scared as well.”

Finally, *Black Mirror* isn't just about technology, as one might assume from

‘Black Mirror’ focuses on ordinary individuals who have been granted extraordinary powers by new technologies, but have yet to fully recognize their own responsibilities and the technologies’ unexpected ramifications.

its title—which refers to the dark screens of dormant cell phones or computers. Unlike the usual science fiction show, it doesn't consciously extrapolate into the future from contemporary science and technology. Instead, Brooker brainstorms outrageous “What if?” scenarios about ordinary human beings, and then imagines gadgets that can actualize such premises. He's been surprised to discover that some of the bizarre notions he dreamt up actually exist: He feared that the drone bees in the third-season episode “Hated in the Nation” might be too goofy, until he discovered that researchers in Japan were already pursuing a similar concept as a way to address the recent decline in hive populations. “We use technology as a McGuffin to tell the stories,” Brooker says; the show is about “what's going on with people.” *Black Mirror* focuses on ordinary individuals who have been granted extraordinary powers by new technologies, but have yet to fully recognize their own responsibilities and the

technologies' unexpected ramifications.

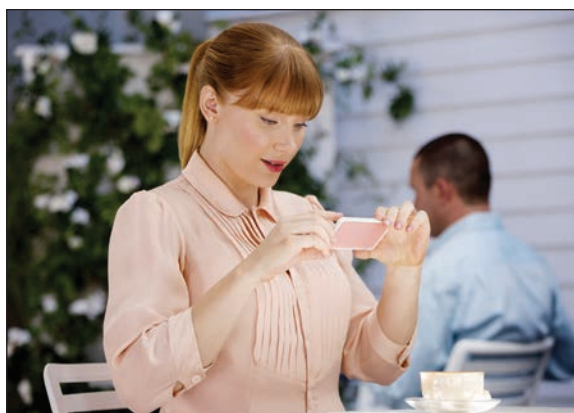
Freud pondered this question following the unprecedented massacre of millions enabled by the concerted use of science and technology during World War I. Humans had become “prosthetic God[s],” he wrote, who lacked the psychological maturity to master their mechanisms. Given the savage events represented in *Black Mirror*, Brooker seems to view humans instead as prosthetic devils who revel in virtual voyeurism, exploitation, blackmail, and communal shunning—all subjects that the show has explored.

The terrorist in “Hated in the Nation” is a misanthrope who proclaims in a manifesto, “Thanks to the technological revolution, we have the power to rage and accuse, spout bile without consequence” (an idea Brooker himself has publicly expressed). He decides to create a “Game of Consequences,” which encourages people to vote for the individual they'd most like to see killed. All anyone need do is append the potential victim's name to the inviting hashtag “#DeathTo.” Many participate, assuming it's a joke; and even when high-scoring individuals start to be murdered, new victims continue to be nominated online. The murders prompt the police to investigate. They discover that the killer's motivation in creating the game is more diabolical than merely killing those who have been chosen by crowdsourcing. His real aim is to collect the names of all those who callously tweeted out a potential victim. In a single moment, he massacres the nearly 400,000 participants by commandeering a recently developed technology: those decidedly non-goofy drone bees, which had been developed to replace the loss of real ones. Watching the massive swarm of buzzing drones hurl themselves like bullets into the bodies of their victims is horrific, but—characteristically—Brooker adds a bit of parody, too. The violence is reminiscent of Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds*, and one can imagine Brooker chortling over his pairing of the birds and the bees.

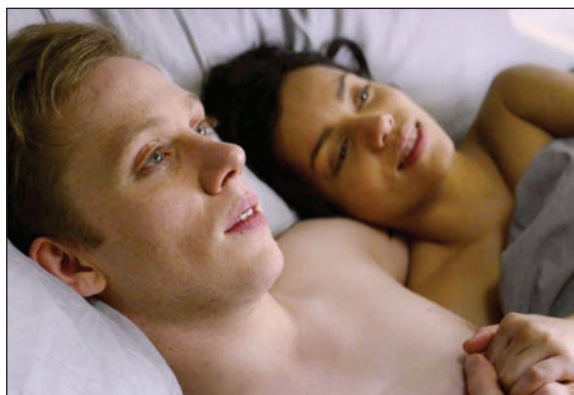
While he shares the terrorist's outrage at the irresponsible use of social media, Brooker is no misanthrope. In writing the show, he tempers the satirist's rage

with empathy for the ordinary foibles of individuals. “I think most people are inherently good,” he says. “When they throw themselves behind some ugly cause, it’s usually out of fear because they’re not availed of all the facts. The show generally reflects that. It’s usually just people with a weakness who end up f—ing up. We don’t have many mustache-twirling villains.” Jon Hamm’s portrayal of Matthew in “White Christmas” is a case in point. (A fan of the show, Hamm contacted Brooker, who then offered him a part.) Hamm plays a down-market version of his Don Draper from *Mad Men*, cajoling others to do his bidding with a combination of smarmy charm and high-tech devices that prove more injurious than cigarettes. Matthew hasn’t foreseen the consequences of his gung-ho salesmanship and gets his comeuppance. But the punishment seems disproportionate because we’ve come to like the guy, whose moral lapses are not that different from those of the smug authorities who sentence him.

For all its darkness, then, *Black Mirror* captivates because it is one of the rare science fiction shows with relatable characters whose emotional responses are plausible and affecting, no matter how bizarre their circumstances. The second season’s “Be Right Back” explores how a young wife copes with the loss of her husband in an accident and the temptation of living with a simulacrum constructed from the traces of him (emails, blogs, voice messages) remaining in the Cloud. In “Arkangel,” from the fourth season, a mother’s urge to protect her child from the traumas of everyday life leads her to adopt a technology capable of blocking anything unseemly from the child’s vision, which takes the consequences of helicopter parenting into tragic dimensions.



Top: Daniel Kaluuya in the first-season episode ‘Fifteen Million Merits,’ a satire of video games and game shows. Above: Bryce Dallas Howard in the third-season episode ‘Nosedive,’ which takes on social-media ratings. Below: The fourth-season episode ‘Hang the DJ,’ with Joe Cole and Georgina Campbell, tackles modern, tech-mediated romance.



Brooker first became known as a humorist, writing for a British television show mocking the news, and as a columnist for the *Guardian*. This background contributes to *Black Mirror*’s distinctiveness. The show is frequently satirical but draws its pathos from treating inherently comic ideas in deadly earnest. The comedian Larry Gelbart

famously claimed, “If it bends, it’s funny; if it breaks, it isn’t.” Brooker goes beyond breaking to shattering, imparting to *Black Mirror* its peculiar ability to lampoon and unsettle at the same time. He told an interviewer that the episode about the prime minister and the pig was “an outrageously jokey premise,” which when played straight became “genuinely disturbing and harrowing because, of course, it would be” if it really happened.

He also had a long stint reviewing computer games professionally, and his knowledge of the medium has had a major influence on the show, particularly in the magnificent world-building of each episode. *Black Mirror* is lovingly and convincingly detailed in its representation of projected gadgets and future environs. The show’s homes, offices, and labs shimmer in hues of blue-gray and off-white that evoke Stanley Kubrick’s *2001*. The imagined devices are seductively organic and appealingly simple—both imitating and mocking the minimalist contraptions made famous by Apple’s Jony Ive. “White Christmas,” for instance, features a “Cookie,” a bean-sized device that makes an artificial replication of human consciousness. Inserted into an “Egg,” it creates a miniaturized version of your self that runs your home and life. With its white, contoured volume and single bright light at its apex, the egg resembles a Brancusi sculpture coupled with HAL 9000: a beautiful prison for the human soul. You can understand why the show’s characters would be willing to be implanted with or colonized by sleek, chic devices that make Alexa and Siri appear as clunky as a Commodore 64. One character has a tiny mechanical fixture jutting out from behind his ear that is likened to a sexy piercing.

TOP: CHANNEL 4 VIA NETFLIX; MIDDLE: NETFLIX; BOTTOM: JONATHAN PRIME / NETFLIX

Black Mirror episodes often adopt the narrative-style of video games, with characters plunged into a mysterious, unfamiliar world that reveals itself progressively. The second season's "White Bear," one of the most terrifying episodes, opens with a woman sitting alone, unable to remember where or who she is. She wanders through different rooms, scrutinizing furniture, photos, and other objects for clues. (Gamers will be reaching for their controllers, such is the urge to click on an item.) Stepping outside, she discovers that people are monitoring her from buildings or following her stealthily and taking pictures. They refuse to acknowledge her pleas for help. Abruptly she's accosted by figures straight out of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, wearing grotesque animal masks and brandishing guns, knives, and power drills. This opening is gripping, but it's also a familiar, *in medias res* gambit from the introductory scenes of numerous video games.

Brooker is particularly fond of "Easter eggs," those inside jokes so prevalent in computer games. He brought many of these self-referential allusions together into the gloomy exhibit spaces of the season four finale, "Black Museum," and in interviews likes to refer to "the *Black Mirror* universe." Creating internally consistent imaginary worlds has become a major trend in mass culture—Steven Spielberg's new hit *Ready Player One* is little more than a hymn to a multiplicity of them—spurred by the pervasive cultural influence of computer games and the vogue for fantasy and science fiction generally. Thus, the writer David Mitchell declared recently that all of his previous novels are part of a wider fictional universe, just as Marvel and DC comics have exported their complex narrative "metaverses" into their film franchises. *Black Mirror* exemplifies the widespread contemporary desire to inhabit virtual realities of the imagination. Like Alice's looking-glass world, Brooker's is an intriguing space consisting of thought experiments and provocative reflections on the limits and promises of the material and virtual worlds.

Yet *Black Mirror*'s pessimism, especially in the early episodes, can be troubling. The first two seasons emphasized

limitations over possibilities and squandered the show's potential to combine entertainment with insight. This is not to say that dystopian fiction can't have utopian purposes; pointed warnings about current trends can foster alternate approaches. Indeed, a *Black Mirror* episode from the second season, "The Waldo Moment," proved eerily prescient in its bleak depiction of mass democracy in an age of infotainment. Waldo, a foul-mouthed cartoon bear operated by an apolitical comedian, mocks the political establishment on a television comedy. To garner publicity for the show, the producers enter him in an election, in which his role is to insult his opponents and execrate the status quo. Waldo has no platform but gains wide support by alluding to the size of his penis and farting in reply to any assertions by the real candidates. Not only does he do well at the ballot box; he becomes the face of populist dissatisfaction with politics around the world and a leering mascot for authoritarianism. When the episode aired in 2013, reviewers complained that it was implausible, one insisting, "There's just not enough there to suggest that Waldo's moment would last much longer than 15 minutes." By 2015, views had changed dramatically. "When Trump was elected," Brooker has recalled, "there were people with banners saying, 'This episode of BM sucks.' At that point, you go, 'Okay; we stand for something in people's heads.'" "The National Anthem" proved unexpectedly prescient, too; in 2015, a biography of David Cameron alleged that as a college student the prime minister had "inserted a private part of his anatomy" into the mouth of a (dead) pig as part of an initiation ceremony at a dining club. Clearly, Brooker has a knack for intuiting public sentiment, technological innovations, and the possible porcine proclivities of politicians.

But if he's an occasional Tiresias, he's also a full-time Cassandra: Many of *Black Mirror*'s early episodes simply promoted catastrophic thinking and suggested the only response is passivity and escapism. Season one's "Fifteen Million Merits," for example, features Bing, a doe-eyed rebel against a totalitarian society that controls its media-bedaz-

zled serfs with the possibility of upward mobility through *American Idol*-like talent contests. Inspired by his love for one of the contestants, Bing sacrifices everything to help her win, only to discover that the whole scheme is a sham. Even worse, his rage against the system, when publicized, proves to be a huge ratings winner. Ultimately the authorities co-opt him—Bing is given his own show to rant against society's injustices, thereby strengthening its leaders' claims about its meritocratic and democratic nature. "Fifteen Million Merits" promoted the very condition Brooker was assailing: the capitulation of human agency to technological determinism. Unlike "The Waldo Moment," many of *Black Mirror*'s early narratives retold rather than rethought familiar complaints. Stories about technological surveillance, cyberbullying, and the malign social consequences of popularity rankings didn't say much that was new, although they said it memorably. The show's reliance on the contrivance of artificial consciousness, whereby human personalities are reproduced down to the tiniest quirk, led to episodes that were closer to fantasy than to science fiction.

With its third season, however, *Black Mirror* began to fulfill its artistic potential and to dramatize the life-enhancing capacities of technology alongside its dangers. One of its most acclaimed episodes, "San Junipero," explored how virtual reality could enable loving relationships that were frustrated by the social conventions and physical limitations of the real world. (The episode garnered two Emmy awards, one for outstanding writing and one for outstanding TV movie.) "Hated in the Nation" may have featured a fiendish villain skilled at manipulating technology, but it also featured a detective equally adept with high-tech who brings him to justice.

Season four, which debuted in December, continues this trend. It "was definitely a conscious attempt to expand what the show was," Brooker says. "We didn't just want to do bleak and nihilistic." The episodes "USS Callister" (a *Star Trek* parody) and "Black Museum" both feature protagonists who capably

use reason and technology to solve problems triggered by innovation. And, revealingly, four episodes from the latest two seasons feature women shown heading off victoriously into an open, albeit uncertain, future. Brooker wants to suggest that “we’re learning how to deal with these new capabilities that we have, these new superpowers we’ve suddenly been granted.”

Using his mirror to capture a wider spectrum of possibilities, Brooker is true to the central aim of science fiction. That is sometimes defined as forecasting the future, but while some science fiction authors have successfully made informed—or lucky—prognostications, it has never been much of a prophetic genre. (The number of stories that predicted the Internet can be counted on Chewbacca’s paw.) At its core, science fiction instead reflects the hopes and fears of the times in which it is created, but transposed into the future, the past, or an alternate world. The original metaphors it deploys help its audiences to better understand the technocultural changes they are experiencing. When novelist William Gibson coined the term “cyberspace” in 1982, the Internet and personal computers were still gestating, and his fecund metaphor for how these innovations could create “consensual hallucinations” influenced many of those who established the infrastructure of our webbed world.

Science fiction provides the enabling myths of our scientific culture. These are all the more necessary today because those who helm the Silicon Valley giants don’t seem to be thinking far beyond their revenues. *Black Mirror* is ideally situated to proffer some enabling myths, given its stated focus on “the way we might be living in 10 minutes’ time” and Brooker’s bravura ability to tell humane stories informed by a canny appreciation of technology’s yins and yangs. These can’t be cast in the black-and-white terms that were used so glibly in the past—the 1990s with its techno-utopians; the 2000s with its jaded pessimists. (These were often the same people.) Charlie Brooker’s show has a clever title, but he’s making it one of the most compelling on television by seeing the world in shades of gray. ♦

B&A

Mad Scientist

The there-and-back-again tale of a brain researcher turned cancer patient. BY STEPHEN PHILLIPS

Imagine a loved one, the rock of your family, displaying in short order the symptoms of mental illness and dementia; a well-adjusted, accomplished person turning obstreperous, mistrustful, and compulsive, confounded by basic arithmetic or a daily commute, and ruminating on imagined slights, mind racing obsessively. Then gradually these behaviors recede; equilibrium and faculties are recovered, and your relative is restored, albeit wearier and warier. This is the story, harrowing yet redemptive, of Barbara Lipska, stricken at 63 with a form of brain cancer. *The Neuroscientist Who Lost Her Mind*, cowritten with Elaine McArdle, is the tale she lived to tell.

As the title indicates, Lipska isn’t your average brain-cancer patient. She directs the National Institute of Mental Health’s Human Brain Collection Core. The “library of brains” she presides over is used by scientists working to better understand and treat mental illness and dementia. In her professional life, Lipska confronts the brain as corporeal object: A donated brain arrives in a “large white cooler” that might otherwise hold “beer and steaks for a football tailgate party.” Hefting one in her hands, “it feels like firm Jell-O.” Removing slivers for examination, she’s advised “Pretend you’re slicing bread or steak.” The resulting sections resemble “cold cuts in a grocery store’s deli case.” Yet this “ordinary-looking piece of meat” is the seat of consciousness and cognition and, when it misfires, the author of tragedy—a third of the organs in the collection come from suicides.

When she notices a blind spot in her field of vision in January 2015, Lip-

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The Neuroscientist Who Lost Her Mind

My Tale of Madness and Recovery
by Barbara K. Lipska with Elaine McArdle
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 188 pp., \$25

ska knows after previous bouts with breast cancer and melanoma—both of which can spread to the brain—to suspect a brain tumor. And when, undergoing intensive treatment for the multiple tumors doctors find, she comes unglued, she can—in retrospect at least—speculate from her actions about the broadly affected regions of the brain and itemize the maladies to which they correspond.

Her behaviors are bizarre, transgressive. One morning Lipska gets a notion to dye her hair. “Now!” After applying the colorant and affixing a plastic cap, she’s gripped by the impulse to go for a run. But the prosthetic breast she’s worn since her mastectomy suddenly seems like too much bother. “*I need to leave now!*”

Purple-red dye oozed down my face and neck as I sprinted out of the house. ... Now, as I run along in the morning heat, the dye spreads over my shirt and stains my asymmetrical chest. ... I have no idea where I am. So I keep moving. It’s preposterous that I could get lost in this familiar place, but that fact barely registers in my mind. With no plan for where I’m headed, I simply continue to run. For another hour or more, I jog along, misshapen and covered in gore. I’m oblivious, unaware of anything amiss.

She makes it home and is exasperated more than anything by her husband Mirek’s discomfiture.

These and other episodes are reconstructed after the fact. Lack of self-awareness can be characteristic

of mental illness and, in the moment, Lipska is unreflective about her actions. The problem lies without—family members conspiring against her, the pest-control guy trying to poison her, a takeout pizza laced with toxic plastic. Later, as if emerging from a fugue state, she has scant recollection of her “breakdown,” before gradually retrieving its mortifying contours.

If Lipska’s book is about “what it’s actually like to lose your mind and then recover it,” it’s also about a new frontier in cancer care and the vertiginous trajectories for recovery being opened up—Lipska’s whole trip to the threshold of insanity and back again is telescoped into two hectic months.

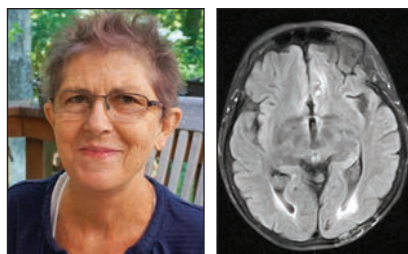
Just a few years earlier, the only course of action for a person with her diagnosis of metastatic melanoma in the brain would have been to set one’s affairs in order. The largest tumor is excised, others are irradiated, but this is an exercise in whack-a-mole, and there’s a limit to how much she can withstand. However, Lipska also receives immunotherapy, a new addition to the cancer-fighting toolset that, instead of attacking tumors directly, marshals the immune system to fight them. The approach is bringing a small but growing number of patients with certain aggressive advanced cancers back to life.

Imbued with scientific insight, Lipska’s description of the carnage inside her head is terrifying:

The tumors that were radiated are shedding dead cells and creating waste and ... dead ... tissue. These old tumors are also under attack by immunotherapy. ... Mortally wounded by my modified T cells, the cancer cells ... are like tiny dead bodies. They must be broken up into smaller particles and removed from my brain through the blood and lymphatic systems. Throughout my brain, the tissues are inflamed and swollen from the metastases and the double assault of radiation and immunotherapy. What’s more, my blood-brain barrier—which normally prevents circulating toxins and other substances from entering the brain—has become disrupted by immunotherapy and is leaking fluids through small vessels and capillaries. The fluids are pooling in my brain, irritating the brain tissue and causing it to swell.

An apparent immediate effect of the immunotherapy is that her cancer goes into overdrive; an MRI finds approximately 18 tumors. These are extinguished following further radiation plus therapy that targets her cancer’s genetic mutations.

A recreational endurance athlete, Lipska hews to a routine of arduous workouts to fortify herself. Which is to say, at bottom, *The Neuroscientist Who Lost Her Mind* is about a sheer bloody-minded will to survive.



Neuroscientist Barbara Lipska and a scan of her brain showing tumors and swelling

Lance Armstrong is no one’s idea of a role model these days, but few would deny his tenacity or instinct for self-preservation, and Lipska takes her cue for managing her care from Armstrong’s memoir about his recovery from testicular cancer that had infiltrated his brain and lungs.

She summons a warrior mentality. After an MRI gives her the all-clear—she’s free of new brain tumors and eligible for an immunotherapy trial—Lipska seeks a second opinion. This finds tumors missed earlier. To divulge them would mean withdrawal from the trial and further radiation, after which she would have to undergo another MRI to verify her eligibility; by then the trial might be full. So she keeps the news to herself, placing herself at mortal risk by enrolling in the trial—the untreated tumors may grow dangerously “inflamed” under immune assault.

“I’m making this decision for myself, by myself,” she writes. “Nothing is going to stop me from entering this clinical trial. I would rather take my chances than die without trying it.” Awaiting an IV hookup, she feels “like a paratrooper jumping off a plane into the dark night, hoping that my parachute will open.”

This and other aspects of her

story—especially the unstinting, borderline-maniacal devotion to exercise—point to the warping effect of mental illness. Lipska’s behavior is not an aberration; she remains herself, just a grotesque “caricature.”

“Throughout my life, I’ve been quick to react, independent, confident, and stubborn,” she writes. “But now, these qualities are reaching an absurd level.”

Still, wracked with pain, the adamant resolve trembles or is at least leavened by something approaching acceptance of whatever fate holds.

Watching a documentary about chanteuse Nina Simone—herself afflicted with bipolar disorder—Lipska is stalked by “a death thought.”

“I cling to Mirek for support and think about my own impending death.” Stirring from the couch, she appends a “do not resuscitate” order to her end-of-life instructions. The “passion to stay alive” coexists with a “readiness to die.”

Shortly afterward, clarity and the balance of her mind begin to return.

Lipska writes movingly about how her debility upset family dynamics as her husband and children tried to adapt: “It was hard for them to recognize my personality changes, especially because I insisted I was fine. Even as the changes became more obvious, my family remained in denial because the new normal was so disturbing.” Especially troubling is their accession to her insistence on driving—she’s a menace to herself and others. But she’s obdurate and heedless.

Today, she exists, “at best,” in the terminally provisional state of “remission,” her cancer in abeyance for now.

At a gathering, Lipska’s doctor baldly tells her and a roomful of fellow advanced melanoma survivors, “Several years ago there would be no luncheon like this ... because most of you would likely be dead.”

Pondering the term “survivor,” Lipska finds the dictionary definition—someone who perseveres and “remains functional and usable”—resonant. Her mind and body battered, she wonders if she meets this standard. If this memoir is any guide, she more than measures up to it.

◆ COURTESY OF BARBARA K. LIPSKA

Dollywood Diversion

'Life ain't as simple as it used to be'—except at Dolly Parton's amusement park. BY AMY HENDERSON

In February, Dolly Parton presented the librarian of Congress, Carla Hayden, with the 100,000,000th book from Parton's Imagination Library. Founded in 1995, the Imagination Library focuses on literacy and each month sends books to pre-kindergarten children to “inspire them to dream.”

One of 12 children, Dolly Parton grew up in a one-room cabin in Locust Ridge, Tennessee. Motivated by the illiteracy of her sharecropper father, she always credited reading as the force that inspired her own dreams and success. Her generosity of spirit is what led her to found her book-giveaway project, and that same spirit permeates Dollywood, the Smoky Mountain theme park she created in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee. Graham Hoppe's intention in *Gone Dollywood* is to describe how the theme park is a manifestation of Parton's embracing personality.

Parton views her life as an example of dream fulfillment. She describes herself as having been a “show-off” from her earliest years. As a child, she learned to play guitar and sang on a local radio program. After graduating from high school, she moved to Nashville, where country music star Porter Wagoner quickly made her a regular on his weekly show. Parton sang with Wagoner from 1967 to 1974 before striking out on her own and wrote one of her most famous songs, “I Will Always Love You,” as a tribute to Wagoner's mentorship.

She emerged as a major country music and crossover star in the 1980s, appearing in such hit films as *9 to 5* (1980), *The Best Little Whorehouse in*

Gone Dollywood
Dolly Parton's Mountain Dream
by Graham Hoppe
Ohio, 168 pp., \$26.95



Parton at her eponymous Tennessee theme park in 1997

Texas (1982), and *Steel Magnolias* (1989).

In the midst of her flourishing career, Parton began working on Dollywood in 1986, rebranding an existing park and greatly expanding it. Today it sprawls over 150 acres and is the biggest tourist attraction in Tennessee, drawing more than 3 million visitors annually. It's meant to be a place, as its website puts it, for families to “disconnect from the world's distractions and reconnect with each other.” In this, Dollywood is more in the tradition of historical American amusement parks than the kind of mega theme-park “spectacles” begun with the creation of Disneyland in 1955.

Dollywood is intended for family entertainment, much like the “pleasure gardens” of the 19th century—recreational amusement parks that featured bandstands, zoos, and circuses for people to enjoy as they picnicked in the fresh air. From 1895 on, Coney Island exemplified this kind of amusement park; it was, wrote historian John F. Kasson in *Amusing the Million* (1978),

“a harbinger of the new mass culture.”

It was American mass culture—and specifically Dolly Parton's celebrity—that made Dollywood possible. But it would be wrong to think of it as simply a shrine to her fame, like Graceland is to Elvis Presley's. Rather, Dollywood is, Hoppe writes, “Parton's imagined idea of the Smoky Mountains” that shaped her life—an attempt to present Appalachian life in a relentlessly positive light. Parton has filled the theme park with “legacy” landmarks that aim to inspire: There is a replica of her childhood home, stores selling hillbilly crafts and knickknacks, a museum of southern gospel music, a “Dollywood Express” steam engine that roars through the park, eight roller coasters, and many other rides.

Hoppe argues that Dollywood is “a corrective for the stereotypes that have annoyed the population in Appalachia for more than a century.” One of Parton's priorities is to showcase “hillbillies” as “a very proud people ... people with class,” as she put it in a 1977 interview. It is a view contrary to the characterization J.D. Vance offers in *Hillbilly*

Elegy, in which he depicts hillbilly life as full of despair and “learned helplessness” (which he escaped by heading to college and law school).

Instead of despair, Parton has infused Dollywood with the inspiration she found in Smoky Mountain life and culture. Hoppe stresses that Dollywood gives everyone “a chance to experience someone else's dreams.”

Gone Dollywood is an odd mix: It lacks the detail of Michael Fridgen's Fodor-esque guidebook *Dollywood and Beyond!* and never cultivates the rigorous cultural considerations of Helen Morales's *Pilgrimage to Dollywood* (2014). Trained as a classicist, Morales draws a fascinating distinction between the visitors who come to Dollywood as a “pilgrimage” because of their affection for Parton and those who come to enjoy it chiefly as an amusement park.

Hoppe's training as a folklorist leads him to speculate in interesting ways about how Parton's celebrity image has infused her theme park. But the short book is also cluttered with oddball

RON DAVIS / GETTY

Amy Henderson is historian emerita of the National Portrait Gallery.

chapters like “Okra, Chicken Livers, and a Break for Dinner.” (When he singled out the local Cracker Barrel restaurant for evoking “the same sense of nostalgia” he felt throughout Dollywood, this reviewer was instantly inspired to hum a chorus of “Sing for Your Supper.”)

At one point, Hoppe remarks on his surprise at the authenticity of the place: “Wherever I looked for irony at Dollywood, I was disappointed. There was no distance, no room for detachment. No hillbillies were winking from behind a moonshine jug or from beneath threadbare straw hats.” He finds the genuineness a reflection of Parton herself: “I may look fake,” she

once said, “but where it counts I’m real.” Although Parton “graciously declined” to be interviewed for the book, Hoppe is fine with that, writing that via her songs, movies, and theme park she is her own “master storyteller.” Parton’s iron grip on her image fits Hoppe’s concluding thought about Dollywood: “The whole place is a performance.”

Hoppe’s profile of the park is a quirky contribution to the lore and legend of Parton. But the book’s chief function is to whet the appetite for more. Dolly Parton is a performer, entrepreneur, philanthropist, and major cultural icon. How is it that she has not yet been the subject of a full-scale biography? ♦

“In an age of distraction and forgetfulness and speed,” says journalist, essayist, and travel writer Pico Iyer, “it’s no surprise, perhaps, that more and more of us are going on retreat, or trying to bring even a little bit of a monk’s discipline and clarity into our overcrowded days.”

Iyer, who writes the foreword to Quenon’s new memoir, *In Praise of the Useless Life*, is one of many Merton enthusiasts who have made their way to Merton’s monastery, hosted by Quenon when they arrive. Among the other pilgrims we learn about in Quenon’s book are poets Seamus Heaney and Czeslaw Milosz, along with Sister Helen Prejean, whose bestselling *Dead Man Walking*, adapted into the movie of that name, made her a global voice against capital punishment.

Quenon seems mildly surprised that people keep showing up at Merton’s old stomping grounds. Though their arrival has by now become routine, he calls these faithful “unexpected visitors” and wonders “why they would come here, of all places.” As the title of *In Praise of the Useless Life* implies, nothing much happens at Gethsemani—at least little that easily can be measured by the market, the media, or modern culture at large.

When properly conducted, life at Gethsemani—and, Quenon hints, an ideal life lived anywhere—“serves no apparent purpose, other than the hidden marvel of being in God.”

This doesn’t mean a passive existence, nor has Quenon led one. Since coming to Gethsemani in 1958, he’s done electrical chores, handled office work, helped with building projects, nurtured the music ministry, published several books of poetry, and taken studio-quality photographs. That, and tending to Merton’s hermitage, keeps him busy.

The challenge—one that followed Merton and to a lesser degree dogs Quenon—is to venerate work as a window into grace while not idolizing the accomplishments of mind and hand.

Although he reveres Merton, who was known at Gethsemani as Father Louis, Quenon notes the pride,

BCA

The Divine Mundane

*Seeking quiet, subtle, everyday redemption
in Thomas Merton’s monastery.* BY DANNY HEITMAN

By the time of his death on December 10, 1968, Thomas Merton had become that memorable paradox, a celebrity monk. Although he led a largely cloistered life as a Trappist at the Abbey of Gethsemani in rural Kentucky, Merton’s many books, including his best-selling 1948 memoir, *The Seven Storey Mountain*, made him a literary star.

Merton struggled to reconcile his religious calling with his global stature. His desire to address political topics such as nuclear proliferation and civil rights brought him into conflict with leaders of his Cistercian order. And his hunger for travel was hard to balance with his monastic obligations. He was attending a conference of Catholic and non-Christian monks in Thailand when a short circuit in a floor fan apparently electrocuted him in his room.

Danny Heitman, a columnist for the Baton Rouge Advocate, is the author of *A Summer of Birds: John James Audubon at Oakley House*.

In Praise of the Useless Life
A Monk’s Memoir
by Paul Quenon
Ave Maria, 142 pp., \$15.95

Five decades after Merton’s passing, his books live on. Later this year, New Directions will publish *Silence, Joy*, a survey of his poetry and prose. Merton’s hermitage at Gethsemani continues to attract visitors from around the world. Brother Paul Quenon, whom Merton advised when Quenon was a novice, has been the hermitage’s long-time caretaker.

In its chronicle of youthful rebellion, radical conversion, and the romance of religious faith, *The Seven Storey Mountain* has been compared to St. Augustine’s *Confessions* as a seminal work of Catholicism, selling more than a million copies in more than a dozen languages. Its suggestion of a richly fulfilling life within the fold of a cloistered community has renewed appeal amid today’s throbbing urgencies of smartphones and Twitter.

sometimes bordering on conceit, that Merton took in his literary prowess. “For a few years, I was the one operating the mimeograph machine and could see how Fr. Louis liked getting things into print, even if it was merely a mimeograph,” Quenon recalls. “One day he handed me an essay, newly typed up, and slapped his hand against his hip and blew on it, like dropping a hot potato: the newest writing, fresh out of the oven.”

Merton’s literary motivations were complex, but the value of his oeuvre strikes Quenon as undeniable: “While writing was often a burden

habit of raising provocative questions without fully exploring them, as when he mentions a long conversation with Iyer about

the tension between a life of solitude and celibacy and the need and human task of coming to understand our sexual lives. Merton was our case in point, since we both knew from his biography that, in the 1960s, he’d fallen in love with a young woman who was serving as his nurse in Louisville.

Quenon doesn’t detail this line of inquiry or offer his own views, concluding with a shrug: “I often find the crisis of romance Merton endured

is of more interest to married people than to celibate religious.”

He’s equally cursory in a passage about Milosz’s polite disagreement with Merton about the nature of nature itself. Milosz thought that Merton

uncritically hailed nature as a source of spiritual affirmation, overlooking its darker aspects.

Quenon, an avid observer of the outdoors who even sleeps outside each night, fails to weigh in himself.

He seems most engaged in a chapter on Emily Dickinson, celebrating her as an abiding spiritual influence: “Her prescription for inner growth is a perfect primer for a Trappist-Cistercian novice. ‘Growth of Man—like Growth of Nature ... / Must achieve—Itself— / Through the solitary prowess / Of a silent life.’”

Quenon delves with perceptive nuance into Dickinson’s poems, considering the degree to which her verse was meant to express spiritual certitude or doubt. “What is both puzzling and authentic is how she can entertain opposite opinions about time and eternity,” he writes. “She lingers on the boundary between the two, jumps from one side to the other and back again.”

Quenon stops short of a unifying theory of Dickinson’s work, underscoring the intellectual restraint that informs *Useless Life*. Ultimately, one of the charming things about the memoir

is the author’s refusal to cast himself as smarter or wiser than he actually is.

To those who assume that a monk is in constant and direct communion with the divine, Quenon offers a disclaimer: “A friend once said, ‘I would love to get inside the head of a monk to see what your life is like.’ I doubt anyone would want to stay inside my head for very long. Not much appears there in terms of spiritual excitement, let alone progress. At most, I live with a dim intuition, an implicit faith that something worthwhile is going on.”

If Merton was a mystic of bright epiphanies, Quenon comes closer to the spiritual experience touching most of us—a marathon, not a sprint. “I have never been a great runner, but I do like to hike,” he writes early on, hinting at what could also describe his quiet slog toward redemption. He’s more inclined to the shaping influence of regimen than the random flash of insight. “The daily routine of the monastery eventually levels you to the plateau of your ordinariness,” he writes. “There the Word become flesh meets me, precisely where I feel the ache of being human.”

The daily rituals of Gethsemani suggest a world without change, though even a monastery is touched at the margins by the march of modernity. Quenon hears a biblical reading at mass about the tower of Babel, a confusing mess, and thinks about “the especially bewildering political atmosphere of today.” Meanwhile, one of Gethsemani’s loveliest views “has been punctured by a blinking cell-phone tower facing me. That surely would have made Fr. Louis storm off to Alaska in indignation, but the rest of us have to live with it.”

As he nears 80, Quenon has come to better understand what all monks—and all sentient souls—are supposed in time to grasp: a sense of what lasts and what does not. “The aging human body gradually leans forward, closer to the earth, as if gravity were pulling it toward its destiny,” he writes. “St. Benedict accredited that lowered head to a monk’s growth in humility. I hope that is true, but meanwhile I am trying to practice good posture and humility as well.”



Above: The Abbey of Gethsemani; inset: Br. Paul Quenon

and complication, creating conflict in his life, it was a positive part of his vocation nevertheless.”

Merton’s struggles lead Quenon to wonder about the underlying contradiction of a cloistered monk’s chronicling himself and his fellows for publication—a dilemma at the heart of *In Praise of the Useless Life*. “In general,” he tells readers, “I think monks and nuns should be putting out some token of their existence (however modest that may be) for others to hear. To the surprise of many, this world continues to be a place where monasticism exists, and we monks do well to let people get some whiff of it, whether they take it seriously or not. For my part, it usually surprises me when anyone finds value in what I write.”

Self-effacement is a theme for Quenon, who takes pains to point out that he doesn’t see his own writing as remotely equal to Merton’s. No reasonable reader can fault him for not being Thomas Merton, though one does occasionally wish for *Useless Life* to be a deeper book than it is. Quenon has a

STEPHEN TAYLOR / ALAMY; INSET: BROTHER LAWRENCE MORLEY



Epic of Growth

Turmoil and stardom in the 1956 film classic Giant.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

I have always loved, unreservedly loved, *Giant*—the grandly scaled and stately 1956 film that sinks us into the world of a Texas rancher and his Marylander wife through 25 years of marriage as their state, their country, their wealth, and their own hidebound attitudes undergo the same seismic financial and social changes that transformed America in the first half of the 20th century. Its radio ads declared *Giant* “a big story of big feelings and big things!” And so it is.

Giant is enthralling and juicy and compelling, a high-water mark in classic American moviemaking—in which a master director like George Stevens takes you by the hand, sits you down in your seat, and says, “Come along with me while I tell you a long, fascinating, bumpy story about this country.” And long it is. Three hours and 21 minutes in all. (The only movie of comparable length in our time is *The Return of the King*, released in 2003.) Stevens said it was a “reflective film,” which he called “the service we can perform as against this other visual medium television, which has to move fast and tell its story within extremely limited time.”

Stevens didn't want to challenge audiences; he wanted to lure them into the movie theater. As University of Texas professor Don Graham writes in his terrific and extraordinarily juicy new book about the movie, Stevens “wanted to give moviegoers an entertainment and an experience that tele-

Giant

Elizabeth Taylor, Rock Hudson, James Dean, Edna Ferber, and the Making of a Legendary American Film
by Don Graham
St. Martin's, 323 pp., \$27.99



James Dean in a promotional still for *Giant*

vision couldn't give them, one that they wouldn't forget.” This was not an uncommon notion at the time, as *Giant* wasn't even the longest movie of 1956. That was *The Ten Commandments*, which went on for another 19 minutes. Both were smash hits.

Graham's book reveals the meticulous care with which Stevens led the screenwriters, designers, and actors. He was at the time perhaps Hollywood's most prestigious director (coming off *A Place in the Sun*, for which he had won an Oscar, and *Shane*, which was all but universally viewed at the time as the greatest Western ever made) and he was unresponsive to complaints from Warner Bros. that he was going over budget and spending too much time on filming.

The production spent five weeks in Marfa, Texas, where Stevens's team built the Victorian mansion that is home to the Benedict family of Reata Ranch. The notion of expressing both

the size and the odd bleakness of Texas in this way was the inspiration of the film's designer, Boris Leven. We see the newlyweds Bick (Rock Hudson) and Leslie (Elizabeth Taylor) driving across a desolate plain toward the house in the middle of nowhere; it is one of the great shots in all of film. There isn't a wrong shot in all 201 minutes—which is to say, even the ones that seem corny or trite or unsubtle are there precisely because Stevens wanted them there.

Giant is about change. The great change is from cattle ranching to oil, and it is Bick's nemesis Jett Rink (James Dean) who strikes a gusher on a tiny plot of land he's been given by Bick's sister. We flash forward two decades

and Rink is the richest man in Texas and that desolate moonscape outside Reata is dotted not with cattle but with derricks.

The theme of change, the glory of it, is what marks *Giant* as Hollywood's greatest liberal epic—a fundamentally ideological tale in which the outsider Leslie shows up in a benighted land and spends 25 years trying to guide her traditionalist husband Bick out

of his sexist, racist, and backward ways.

Indeed, both Bick and Jett Rink are basically examples of what we would today call “toxic masculinity,” a fact made all the more ironic because, as Graham discusses, Hudson was gay and living a false-front life and Dean was “sometime[s] gay.” Graham's depiction of their internal and personal conflicts, and the extreme self-destructiveness that led Dean to die in a car crash before *Giant* was completed, give his book surprising weight.

The difference between 1956 wokeness and 2018 wokeness is that Leslie succeeds in her reform project by degrees and watches with pride as her husband loses a violent fight with a diner owner who refuses to serve Mexicans. Stevens brought to the wonderful *Giant* a fundamentally optimistic view of American life that his successors in wokeness would do well to emulate.

John Podhoretz, editor of Commentary, is THE WEEKLY STANDARD's movie critic.

◆ WARNER BROS.

“New York has taken to Chick-fil-A. One of the Manhattan locations estimates that it sells a sandwich every six seconds, and the company has announced plans to open as many as a dozen more storefronts in the city. And yet the brand’s arrival here feels like an infiltration, in no small part because of its pervasive Christian traditionalism.”

—Dan Piepenbring, the New Yorker, April 13, 2018

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OPINION

New York Salad in Atlanta? Fuggedaboutit!

Chopt chain infiltrates
Buckhead, Toco Hills.

By Brent Tarleton
btarleton@ajc.com

“Salad isn’t the start of the meal, it’s the whole meal.” So says Chopt Creative Salad Company. And it sends shivers down my spine.

Atlanta was doing just fine without “destination salads” like Spicy Sonoma Caesar and the Baja Shrimp Bowl. Who on God’s green earth would ever contemplate eating rainbow carrots and crispy rice crackers? New Yorkers, that’s who. City sophisticates who, following their PiYo workouts, actually look forward to a bowl of kale and quinoa crisps. As if quinoa wasn’t bad enough!



Classic Caesar with chicken? No, sir. It’s an abomination. Jazz Guy

The Mediterranean Falafel (is that even a salad?) includes quinoa cauliflower and broccoleaf. What’s the matter? Traditional cauliflower and broccoli ain’t good enough for you city folk?

Sure, everyone’s trying to get healthy, I understand that. And the Chopt chain is clearly doing well as it opens two stores in Atlanta with more to come—let’s call it Chopt’s March to the Sea. And yet the brand’s arrival here feels like an infiltration, in no small part because of its pervasive New York attitude: smug, pretentious, and obnoxious. Well, I say, “No, thanks!” You can keep your hearts of palm. You can keep your spicy tahini, too. And you can keep your English cucumbers (which of course you prefer to the American). And you can keep your Free-Bird chicken. In fact, the only Free Bird we need around here is the power ballad by Lynyrd

Yankeefare continued on **A5**

the weekly
Standard

APRIL 30, 2018